

AN

APOLOGY FOR HUMAN NATURE.

BY THE

LATE REVEREND AND LEARNED

CHARLES BULKLEY.

————— All his parts,
His virtues all, collected, fought the good
Of Human Kind. ———

THOMSON.

WITH

A PREFATORY ADDRESS TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

BY

JOHN EVANS, A. M.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

TO the several respectable individuals, by whose kindness this tract is enabled to make its appearance, the Editor returns his thanks. On *his* part, he has spared no pains to extend its sphere of usefulness, by the distribution of it into chapters—assigning to each of them titles, breaking it down into shorter paragraphs, and adding to the perspicuity of the style by the retrenchment of a few superfluous expressions. In every other respect *the Apology* remains just as the Author left it. Not one word has been added to the manuscript. Such (at the desire of the Author's relatives and friends) has been the Editor's humble province. He has endeavoured to discharge it to the best of his ability.

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APPENDIX

To the Editor of the *Register*,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your issue of the 10th inst. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours, &c.
J. B. [Signature]

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PREFATORY ADDRESS,

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ. M. P.

SIR,

YOUR treatise, entitled, *A Review of the Prevailing Religious Systems of Professed Christians*, I perused with attention. With the practical tendency of several parts of the work I was much pleased. Indeed, as far as you lament and endeavour to banish the spread of infidelity, the worldly-mindedness of christian professors, and the prevalence of irreligion among mankind, we are most cordially agreed. But with you I cannot suppose, that these evils flow from the *natural* constitution of man. To me, it appears with irresistible evidence, that vice of every kind is a perversion of his nature. We corrupt ourselves. It is

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the use and abuse alone, of our intellectual and moral powers, that render us proper subjects either of reward or of punishment, in that awful day when *God shall judge the world in righteousness!*

That man is depraved from his birth, is, Sir, the favourite tenet that pervades your performance. It may be denominated the basis, on which your theological system is raised. You have been, therefore, pleased to declare in an introductory chapter, that, "MAN is tainted with *sin* not " slightly and superficially, but radically " and to the VERY CORE!!" These are your expressions. It is the purport of the subsequent pages to shew, that such a position is derogatory to the divine perfections, and contrary to the whole tenor of revelation. Hence has it been thought, that there would be a propriety in addressing to you this Apology of my late learned friend, which forms a suitable answer to your reasonings on the corruption of human nature. Nor can you be displeased with the liberty here taken. It
may

may be the means of promoting the investigation of divine truth. The true christian, conscious of his fallibility, is ever open to conviction. “ The cause of truth
 “ (said an eminent divine) may be compared to an engine, constructed so as to
 “ be put in motion by *the tide*, and which
 “ is kept in its proper movement, whether the water flows in or flows out.
 “ Nothing here is wanting but *motion*—if
 “ being impossible for that motion, from
 “ whatever quarter it arise, to operate
 “ unfavourably.”

Those who knew the Author of this Apology, or who are conversant with his writings, will discern in this production the same traits of intelligence and of benevolence by which his character was invariably distinguished. In one of your notes, you recommend to your readers the lives of those excellent men, Philip and Matthew Henry. The Reverend Charles Bulkley, Sir, was an immediate descendant of theirs; and personal acquaintance authorizes

thorizes me to declare, that he inherited the virtues of his ancestors.

The spirit, with which this tract is written, sufficiently evinces the benevolence of the Author's heart, and is deserving of universal imitation. In him, indeed, the virtue of *Christian candour* shone forth, throughout a long series of years, with undiminished lustre. The vice of uncharitableness formed no part of his system. Sentiments, not persons, were the objects of his reprobation. He never charged those who dissented from his creed with a perversion of understanding, or with an obliquity of heart. Conscious himself of fallibility, he did not assume towards others, on any occasion, the tone of infallibility. Contemplating human nature in a just point of view, he commiserated its imperfection. Though in his opinion, many of his fellow christians erred from *the faith once delivered to the saints*; yet he never attempted to injure their character by the imputation of irreligion,

ligion, nor did he, with the fullness of the bigot, consign them over to eternal destruction. Knowing that his *erring* brethren were, together with himself, amenable to an higher tribunal, he never dared to condemn without mercy, but exercised that evangelical CHARITY *which hopeth and believeth all things*. To him with justice might be applied the beautiful lines, written by GROTIUS, on the death of *Arminius* :

Cui caritate temperata libertas
 Certat manere dissidentibus concors :
 Piæque purus æquitatis affectus,
 Damnatus aliis, ipse neminem damnat ;
 Modestæque limitem premens, donat
 Nunc verba vero, nunc silentium paci.

Thus *to love one another*, notwithstanding differences of religious sentiment, is *the new commandment* delivered by Jesus Christ to his disciples—and by the great Apostle Paul, it was denominated, *the fulfilling of the law*. Excuse me, Sir, for thus expatiating with a degree of enthusiasm, on the despised virtue of CHARITY. For a

minister of the Gospel to neglect in these times any opportunity of inculcating it, would be unpardonable. It is the sum and substance of the Christian religion*.

The Author of this Apology, rejecting a *natural* predilection for evil, has nevertheless, in an easy and satisfactory manner, accounted for the vices of mankind. His words are these: “ Though man be
 “ by the *natural* principles of his mind
 “ well fitted for the practice of virtue,
 “ and for making godlike improvements
 “ in it, yet being by nature IMPERFECT,
 “ he must be supposed capable of neglecting the right use of these his inward
 “ powers and native affections. When such
 “ negligence has been *once* indulged, the
 “ mind has been naturally prepared, in
 “ some slight degree, for the continuance
 “ of it. And thus, at length, custom and
 “ habit may carry men to the most ex-

* *Zeal* and *Candour* (said Sir Richard Steele) are two of the best things in the world—only let us be careful to keep *fire* out of the one, and *frost* out of the other.

“ *travagant*

“travagant and enormous pitch of vice,
 “whilst every offender is encouraged by
 “innumerable examples of the like kind
 “in others *.” Here is no mystery.
 This hypothesis is pertinent, intelligible,
 and pregnant with instruction. That our
 nature becomes depraved by *actual* trans-
 gression—that upon repentance we are to
 look up to the mercy of God alone for
 forgiveness—that we are to abound in
 good works, from a principle of grateful
 obedience—and, finally, that after we have
 done our utmost, we are still *unprofitable*
servants; these are the doctrines of the New
 Testament—taught by Jesus Christ, and
 sealed with his *own blood*! But the posi-
 tion of *innate* depravity has no connection
 with these evangelical truths, and only
 augments the difficulty arising from the
 existence and diffusion of moral evil.
 Pause, Sir, for a moment. Can an infi-
 nitely *pure* and *just* God, produce from
 the period of Adam’s transgression, a series
 of beings—“tainted with sin, not slightly,
 “and superficially, but radically and to

* Apology, page 62.

“the

“ the VERY CORE?” Such a sentiment is utterly incredible. It militates against our best feelings, and is repugnant to every idea both of justice and of benevolence *.

With you, Sir, *the Apologist* strenuously contended for the atonement of Christ,

* “ How can we be guilty *by nature* (exclaims the “ sensible and devout JOB ORTON) since guilt is a “ consciousness of having acted wrong? Our guilt “ and misery consist in having sinned, or in consequence of our sins. *Jeremiah* calls children *innocents*, Jer. ii. 34, and Christ says, except ye be “ converted and become as *little children*, &c. Matt. “ xviii. 3. I cannot reconcile these passages, and “ many more, with the high notions of some persons, “ concerning the doctrine of original sin. What I “ understand by that doctrine is, (and which I take “ to be a fact) that as we are born with less perfect “ constitutions, so the passions are stronger and less “ governable, and thereby we are more easily *led into* “ *sin*. I have known so many instances in which “ persons have excused their sins and bad tempers, “ by pleading original sin, that I would be extremely “ cautious how I gave the most distant encouragement to such absurd and dangerous pleas.”—*Letters to a Young Clergyman, from the late Rev. Mr. Job Orton*. Page 134.

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and for the influences of the Holy Spirit. This appears from his *Gospel Economy*, where his explication and defence of those doctrines occupy a considerable portion of the volume. But *he* did not deem it necessary to found these doctrines on the *innate* depravity of human nature, which is the workmanship of God. On the other hand, persuaded that man is not *naturally* depraved, he must have entertained an higher opinion of the divine benevolence, and could, therefore, admit more readily, that his Creator had actually interposed for his recovery and restoration. Under this consideration he embraced, with an additional energy, this primary truth, by which the Gospel stands characterized—*God so LOVED the world, that he sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life* *.

* The reader will find two judicious discourses on this subject, in a volume of Sermons published by the venerable Hugh Worthington, of Leicester. *Taylor* and *Whitby* also, on *Original Sin*, merit an attentive perusal. The former was an eminent divine among the Protestant Dissenters—the latter, a very learned and worthy clergyman of the established church.

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The drawing up of this tract must have cost its Author many a studious hour. Why he did not publish it during his life time, cannot now be ascertained. But the care with which it appears to have been written, and the fair transcription of it from his short-hand copy, are strong presumptive proofs that he intended it for the press. I am, therefore, glad in having it in my power thus to rescue it from oblivion, and in presenting it to the public, at a period when its contents, in consequence of your late publication, prove peculiarly seasonable.

From this *Apology for Human Nature*, the unbeliever, the worldly-minded man, and the follower of Jesus, may derive valuable lessons. The unbeliever will perceive, that *the God of Nature*, is not at variance with *the God of Grace*, and this should operate as a powerful inducement to his reception of the Gospel. The worldly-minded man must be convinced, that suffering his affections to be engrossed by the objects of time and sense, to the neglect of virtue and religion, he acts very differently

differently from what the dignity of his nature demands. Above all, the follower of Jesus will rejoice in the high destination of his being, and exult in that revelation *as worthy of all acceptance*, which enables him, with greater facility, to improve and perfect *the image of God* in which he hath been created.

Happy, Sir, should I deem myself, did this posthumous tract produce (under the blessing of God) either of these salutary effects. Every attempt, however, to meliorate the condition of mankind, is entitled to a candid reception, even though it be conducted on principles different from those which we ourselves have espoused. That the Supreme Being hath at heart the felicity of his creatures, is a most reviving consideration, and proves an inexhaustible source of comfort to those by whom it is realized in its full extent. **GOD IS LOVE.** His rational offspring he never will desert. By *every* denomination is it acknowledged, that doctrines necessary to the illumination of their understandings

standings—precepts requisite to the government of their passions—and prospects of futurity adapted to cheer and invigorate their hearts, are contained in **THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!** Amidst all the discordancies therefore, by which the christian world hath been inflamed and agitated, *the universal parent* will so overrule our multifarious efforts in behalf of virtue and of piety, that they shall ultimately redound to his glory and to the good of mankind.

Recommending to your attention, the following able vindication of the moral government of God in the constitution of MAN, and sincerely wishing you success in every effort calculated to advance the interests of suffering humanity, and of true religion: I subscribe myself,

SIR,

Your's, very respectfully,

J. EVANS.

HOXTON-SQUARE,

OCT. 2, 1797.

AN

APOLOGY FOR HUMAN NATURE.

ΣΥΟΚΕΙ ΤΑ ΣΑ, ΤΑ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΑ.

MAXIM. TYR.

INTRODUCTION.

NEXT to the character of the SUPREME CREATOR and LORD OF ALL, there cannot possibly be any subject more deserving of our attention than the original constitution of human nature. For though there be indeed other beings superior in rank and dignity to man, yet of these, (when we have excepted those fuller discoveries that have been made in the gospel, concerning the vast amazing

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pre-eminence of the Son of God,) we must confess it to be absolutely impossible for us to attain to more than a comparatively superficial knowledge. Could we however acquire as exact an idea of the distinguishing excellencies of these other beings, as we may undoubtedly, by proper reflection, obtain of the constitution of our own minds, yet *with ourselves* for certain, must be our *first, immediate, grand* concern.

It is from the original principles of human nature, the duties owing to other beings directly flow. For can it ever be thought, that the duty of man should consist in contradicting his nature? If not—it must consist in obeying it. Are not the ends and uses of all things around us determined by their inherent qualities? How then can we judge aright of the relation which we ourselves stand in to other minds, or of the manner in which we ought to be affected towards them, if we are strangers to the constitution of our own? What just views can we form of our own happiness, or how can we learn so to regulate our pursuits as to
secure

secure it, if we know not what kind of happiness it is that we are by nature made for? Or how is it possible that a man should know himself in particular; that is, his own distinct character, his present temper, his habitual disposition to any valuable purpose, without being first acquainted with human nature in general; or in other words, without previously knowing what it is that becomes him as a man?

Let not therefore THE APOLOGY we are now about to make be slightly thought of, as being a matter merely speculative. For in what speculations can man be interested, if not in those which relate to man himself? Or who can imagine that confused notions upon this subject, can have the same good effects as we might reasonably look for from a well formed judgment concerning it? We seem to think it an honour to the Deity, that our thoughts should be employed in contemplating the works of nature. And from these we expect to draw demonstrative proofs of his perfections and providence.

We applaud experimental philosophy. We commend the labours of the curious botanist and skilful astronomer. And is man the only object to be overlooked; man, whom we agree to call the chief of this lower creation; in whose constitution, therefore, we might naturally expect to meet with at least equal displays of the divine goodness and wisdom? Or must we confine our idea of humanity to that bodily system which only *belongs* to man, whilst *the mind, and that alone*, is properly speaking the man himself? Why then must our experiments be confined to the visible works of nature, as if these were their only province? It is true, that sublime songs of praise have taken their rise from a survey of the inanimate world, of the animal system, and of the œconomy of the human body, together with the arrangement of its several parts. But can *the mind*, which thus contemplates the other works of God, and thus devoutly admires the traces of divine wisdom and goodness: can this mind itself, I ask, be without beauty and order, affording no ground

ground of admiration or source of praise? Is the heart of man the only forlorn, comfortless, and unentertaining region of nature? Or must we not rather conclude, that it is inattention alone that can prevent our discovering, in the internal frame of man, convincing demonstrations of the divine attributes, and the most engaging motives to all piety and virtue?

Such accounts have indeed been frequently given of human nature, as, had we any reason so much as to suspect them to be true, might well make us averse to all contemplation of ourselves. They might indeed have the most unhappy effect not only towards putting us out of conceit with ourselves, but likewise, for the same general reason, towards weakening our belief of the divine perfections. For let us imagine only, that any one should endeavour to point out as many blemishes, as many original tendencies to evil and misery in the contexture of the human body, as some have been extremely fond to point out in a supposed *natural* state of the human mind, would he

not be justly looked upon as intending to discredit the divine workmanship, and to introduce the fundamental principles of atheism? Could he at least in any other way be cleared from such a charge, than by supposing that he was not in reality sensible of the consequences so directly resulting from the principles he advanced? This is indeed the candid interpretation to be put upon that earnestness, with which so many have publicly contended, for a propensity to vice (vice, the shame, the disorder, the bane of human society) as *naturally* belonging to the mind of man, and as making a part of its original constitution.

But whilst we put this favourable construction upon their zeal, we presume ourselves to be at the fullest liberty of disputing the truth of their opinion. This, accordingly, is the purport of our present APOLOGY, in which every reader will have to look upon *himself* as being *personally concerned*. For not the modes, customs, or interests of any particular body of mankind, but *the glory of human nature itself*, is

is what we are about to vindicate. And,
O thou supreme fountain of light and of
truth!

“What in me is dark
“Illumine, what is low raise and support,
“That to the height of this great argument
“I may assert eternal providence,
“And justify the ways of God to men.”

MILTON.

CHAP. I.

OF MAN IN GENERAL—AND OF THE
IMAGE OF GOD IN WHICH HE WAS
CREATED.

MAN is “an intelligent being, endued
“with moral principles, and posses-
“sing a certain degree of dominion or
“sphere of power.” To his intelligence
belongs, in the first place, those immediate
ideas which we have of many things,
without any intervening steps of argu-
ment; such as the idea of figure, of shape,
of

of number, of beauty in general and of its several classes, of order, proportion, and harmony. To which we may perhaps add, that of a mind or designing cause, as immediately apprehended to be the author of such harmony and order. Unless indeed this last should rather be considered as an intuitive proposition and so be numbered amongst those which we generally distinguish by calling them self-evident: Such as, ~~that the whole is greater than any of its parts; that the whole is equal to all its parts; that those things which are equal to the same thing, are also equal to themselves; and many others of the like kind.~~ These self-evident propositions are the ground work of all human science. Yet of themselves they contain but a very small part of it. It is by comparing these original ideas of the mind, by considering them both in a separate and connected view, by pursuing them through all their consequences, and by applying them to the state of things around us, that we multiply our ideas, exalt our conceptions, penetrate into the uses of the various parts

parts of nature, learn to accomodate them to the beneficial purposes of life, and, in a word, improve ourselves in knowledge and wisdom, in proportion to the diligence which we exert in endeavouring to acquire them. This is the peculiar office of that faculty in man which we distinguish by the name of REASON.

But in those moral principles which we just now mentioned, we discover a still nobler part of the human constitution. This I call a nobler part, in compliance with what plainly appears to be the genuine dictates of nature, with relation to the perfections of the Supreme Being. Are not his goodness, his justice, his mercy, considered as having a far superior excellency to that which we do or even can, in consistency with the natural dictates of our own minds, attribute to his knowledge, understanding, and wisdom? When any of our own species indulge themselves in vicious habits, do we not universally look upon them as alienated from a divine life, however careful they
may

may still be to cultivate their rational powers? And do we not in the same manner consider those malignant spirits, stiled in scripture *the devil and his angels*, as being totally estranged from all traces of that divine image, of which they were once possessed, purely on account of their moral degeneracy? Do we not still believe them to retain very high degrees of understanding? Besides, if we suppose man to have been made for social happiness and mutual aid, we could not but have concluded him to have been very incompletely formed for that end, had he not been endued with principles of nature that might instigate him to seek the good of society, as well as with those that might enable him to promote it. For a mere power of doing good, such as arises from intelligence, does not carry in it any manner of security for the actual production of it. Nor is there any more difficulty or impropriety in supposing that man should be made naturally benevolent, than there is in supposing that he should be made naturally rational or intelligent. Accord-

ingly

ingly we find that a principle of universal benevolence makes an essential part of his internal frame: not only right views exist of

This benevolent affection is enforced by another principle, that of conscience constituting by its authoritative voice, universal love to be the supreme law of human action. In subserviency to which many particular sympathies of our natures strongly co-operate; and with which even our private interest is made to coincide.

From what has been briefly remarked concerning the *intellectual* and *moral* frame of man, it is easy to collect what must be the nature and extent of that dominion which heaven has assigned him, and what the purposes which it is intended to answer. By his sagacity he is enabled to extract innumerable advantages from the inanimate part of the creation; and not only so, but even to render the strength, the swiftness, the particular instincts belonging to different species of the brutal kind, subservient to his own accomodation. But the dominion of man over the animal part of the creation extends itself still farther,

farther, including the right with which he has been invested by the Sovereign-Creator, to take away their lives for the sustenance of his own. There have indeed been those, both pagan and christian, who have apprehended that this was not the primitive practice of mankind. Some of the latter name have alledged, that there is a very remarkable difference of expression in the description which Moses has given of the original dominion of man over the brute creation, and that which he represents him as being possessed of after the flood; such a difference as seems to imply an opinion, or to amount to a declaration, that before that period it did not extend to a right of taking away the life of brutes, in order to feed upon their flesh. In the former of these the expressions are only general—"Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth;" without any more express intimation, that any of these animals were intended for the food of man. Whereas it is particularly asserted in the following
verse,

verse, with respect to the "herbs" and "fruits" of the earth, that they were to be to him "for meat." The same is as particularly asserted with respect to the animal creation, Genesis ix. 1, 2; where the historian is speaking of the dominion to be exercised over it by the postdiluvian race. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." But it is to be remembered that the Psalmist, when speaking of man's dominion over the animal world, expresses himself in the same general terms that are made use of by Moses in the first Chapter of Genesis, and which have just now been cited.—"Thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thine hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."

Now as David did undoubtedly include in these general expressions the particular right of destroying such animals as were fit for the nourishment of man, what difficulty can there be in supposing, that the same right was included in the like general expressions, when made use of by Moses? Not to mention how hard it must be to conceive, as is observed by the learned Bishop of Clogher in his Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament, Part II. p. 150, of what use a dominion over the fishes could be to the anti-diluvian race, if they were not at liberty to destroy them for their food.

It has been urged, that there is some appearance of cruelty in the practice of destroying animals for the sake of feeding upon their flesh; and that therefore it may be well presumed, that it was not a part of the original law of creation. But it is undeniably evident, that by this very law of creation itself, larger fishes, larger insects, and larger beasts, feed upon the smaller of their respective kinds. And what

what greater appearance of cruelty could there be in appointing certain species of animals to be the food of man, than in making some of them to be a prey to others of their own kind? Besides, as all nature is so full of life, it is utterly impossible that man should live even upon a vegetable diet without destroying multitudes of little animals, whose lives are altogether as precious to them as that of a sheep to a sheep, or of an ox to an ox. With a very aukward air, however, most certainly must those who have insisted upon this appearance of cruelty, as a reason why animal food could not be according to the primæval law of nature appointed for man, afterwards represent it as the prerogative of a supernatural revelation alone to establish this right; as if the Supreme Being, might consistently with his own perfections, be cruel by revelation though not by the light of nature.

But though it seems very evident, that the right of destroying certain brute creatures, for the sake of feeding upon their flesh, was a right originally belonging to
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man,

man, yet it is plain from what has been already observed concerning the benevolent principles implanted in his frame, that *this dominion over them* is to be exercised with the utmost lenity towards those brute-creatures themselves, as well as with such a moderate gratification of our appetite in the use of the food which they afford us, as shall be most perfectly consistent with every moral obligation and social office. And here we are reminded of extending, in our observations upon human nature, the natural dominion of man far beyond his power over the material and merely animal creation. For being endowed with various principles, affections, and propensities, and one of these being by her own direction pointed out as the supreme law of his nature, here is evidently an ample sphere of government established within himself, and one too which we must needs look upon as being by far the most noble and the most important within the extent of his dominion. Upon this internal government, rightly conducted and duly maintained, depends his improving likeness to
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the most glorious and resplendent excellencies of his Creator, the just exercise of his power over the inferior creatures, and his own lasting happiness. For it is the well-known sentiment both of the Old and New Testament, that "*man is made in the image of God.*" Whence we necessarily infer his capacity of making continual advances in this divine likeness, by a right exercise of the several faculties originally belonging to his nature. In what has thus far been insisted upon, we see, after the clearest manner, the propriety of this scripture language.

We are not indeed to imagine, that there is any power subsisting in the divine mind strictly answering to that reasoning faculty in man, which constitutes so essential a part in his internal frame. This faculty we well know to be capable only of a gradual expansion, and of leading us on by slow advances to a just discernment of things. Whereas the whole of the divine knowledge is absolutely intuitive; to which those original notions with which we are by the very constitution of our

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nature.

nature endowed, must bear a nearer analogy. Yet as human knowledge must, so far as it extends, and in whatever manner acquired, bear a general, however faint, resemblance to divine knowledge, and as this rational principle in man is the chief instrument of knowledge, it must needs be looked upon as virtually containing in it the image of the divine understanding, or at least as principally contributing to its formation in the soul.

Neither can it, without the greatest irreverence, be imagined, that the all-perfect benevolence of the Deity should stand in need of any aids in the least degree analogous to those which are derived to human virtue from the principle of conscience, as well as from the particular and subordinate affections of a friendly nature belonging to our moral frame. Yet as by these methods the best provision must have been made in the created imperfect nature of man for improving the benevolent temper, they will properly enough be included in that general expression of being "made in the image of God." And this especially,

pecially, as the principle of conscience maintaining its due authority in the soul, must necessarily produce that complacency in virtue, and that disapprobation of vice, which we attribute in the greatest perfection of them to the supreme Creator; though we cannot justly suppose, that there should be any quality in the divine mind corresponding to this our moral sense or principle of conscience. If we attend to what passes within ourselves, we shall find that as we improve in the benevolent temper, we have a proportionable complacency in it, and aversion to its contrary, arising from the very temper itself, independently of the dictates of our moral sense. Perfect benevolence in the Deity, we cannot but conclude, therefore, to be attended with a perfect complacency in virtue, and abhorrence of vice, since it can only be in conformity to such a principle of moral approbation, essentially belonging to the divine mind, that such has been the constitution of ours. And to suppose this complacency and abhorrence, thus essentially

tially connected with the perfect benevolence itself, and not to have any distinct principle of moral approbation for its ground, seems most agreeable to that absolute simplicity which we attribute to the nature of the divine Being. At the same time we must recollect, agreeably to what has been already hinted, that the implanting in the mind of man such a separate principle is a most wise provision for the farther security of virtue in the human heart, just in the same manner as the implanting distinct principles of compassion, of gratitude, of parental tenderness in the breast of man, though the general principle of benevolence does itself prescribe them. So that, allowing only for that infinite distance there must ever be between all-created excellency, and that which is divine, it may with the fullest propriety be said of man, that he is made *in the image of God*; formed as he is for the cultivation of that benevolence, which is the immediate image of the divine goodness, that goodness, which is the highest glory

glory of the eternal Deity, and from which proceed the admirable order and perfect œconomy of his sovereign providence!

As we have seen the natural dominion of man over the inferior creation, to be founded not solely upon his rational faculties, but upon these in conjunction with the benevolent principles of his nature, and in subserviency to them; as we have discovered an extensive and most interesting scene of government, appointed for him within the province of his own mind, a government founded upon the dignity of his moral frame, and intended to complete it; here too, the general similitude of the human nature in the original formation of it, to the essential glories of the divine, must needs be evident. For what is the government of the sovereign Deity, but the “exercise of loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth,” and throughout universal nature? *“For in these things do I delight,” saith the Lord.*

Such then is MAN, thus venerable in his frame, thus godlike in his nature! How glorious would have been his history; how exalted

exalted his attainments; how exquisite and permanent would have been the felicity of this lower world, had man been duly conscious of himself! But, alas! whilst other creatures around us remain inviolably true to the original order of their being, it is MAN, and MAN alone, revolts! How full both of benignity and of wisdom, how worthy to be ascribed to the divinity itself, is that expedient for our recovery with which, through the wonderful condescension of the Son of God, we have so long been favoured! But is it ever enough to be lamented, that this very expedient itself, even *the most holy gospel of Jesus Christ*, has, through the corruption of its principles, been made to countenance this very apostacy? How great the number of those, who, under the sanction of the christian religion, have been far from asserting the moral image of God in man, and thus pointing out the only natural foundation for any hope of success, in our efforts after virtue and goodness. On the contrary, they have given the greatest possible encouragement to the universal degeneracy
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of mankind, by maintaining that, though the first parents of the human race had indeed this divine image deeply impressed upon their minds, and enjoyed the fairest advantages by the original formation of their natures for the improvement of it, yet we their offspring, are BY NATURE *corrupt* and *degenerate*, and as much disposed by the original propensities of our minds to evil, as were they by their original affections to good.

There are others indeed, professors also of christianity, who do not carry the matter quite so far, but seem however to apprehend, that there is an unhappy bias in our very natures to that which is vicious, and that our natural advantages for virtuous practice, so far as relates to our internal constitution, fall vastly short of those which they suppose the first parents of our race to have enjoyed. It is, therefore, with reference to this *moral image of God* in man, that I have proposed to shew, that it is as true of mankind at present, as it was of the first parents of human race, that they are "*made in the image of God*"—to obviate
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any objections that may seem to lie against this hypothesis, and to point out a variety of advantages that obviously flow from it.

CHAP. II.

MANKIND NOW CREATED IN THE IMAGE
OF GOD—PROOFS FROM REASON—OB-
JECTIONS ANSWERED.

IT is to be observed, in the FIRST place, that God is as truly our creator, as he was the creator of our first parents. It has been alledged, and very justly by those who plead for the moral rectitude of the first of human race, in opposition to the supposed corruption of their posterity, that it would have been utterly inconsistent with the goodness, purity, and holiness of God, that he should have made man at first otherwise than pure and upright. They speak of it as a most manifest absurdity to suppose, that they should have been at first endowed with corrupt affections. But are
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not *we*, as well as the first parents of human race, the creatures of God? If it was inconsistent with his perfections, that man should at first have been made corrupt, must it not be equally inconsistent with the same perfections, that he should *now* be made so? Can so short an interval have produced so vast a change in the character of the Deity, that the very same thing should then be absolutely repugnant to his perfections, and yet should not only *now*, but *ever since* then, be perfectly consistent with them? Should it be urged, that, notwithstanding the original corruption of the present race of mankind, it is still acknowledged, that human nature itself came out of the hands of God immaculate; let us consider what it is that may possibly be meant by the terms, *human nature*.

Do they mean, by way of distinction, the original parents of the human race? Upon this interpretation it is to be observed, that their being made with dispositions favourable to virtue, will be far from vindicating the wisdom and goodness of the Deity in making all the rest of the world with

contrary dispositions. For let us suppose the several species of animals, whose formation we now admire, had appeared to have been so maimed, so distorted in every part, as that the natural consequence of such a frame must have been misery to themselves, and universal mischief to the whole animal tribe—Would not this have furnished out a powerful objection, either against the wisdom or the goodness of the Sovereign Creator? Could we have thought it sufficient to say in answer, that the first animals of every species had been better formed? Must not such an answer be still less satisfactory in relation to the principal part of this lower creation? Why then, whilst, with so commendable a zeal, we contend for beauty and order in the other parts of nature, are we so ready to give up all apprehension of it in MAN? Or are we by the terms, human nature, to understand the whole collective body of mankind, as characterized by certain principles and powers common to the species at large. Be it so. This is the natural sense of the terms. But then if human nature in this sense

sense be endowed with dispositions favourable to virtue, it cannot possibly be said in the same sense, of mankind in general, that they are by nature corrupt. And if both these senses of the phrase be excluded, let any one imagine what possible idea can be annexed to it.

Nor will it at all invalidate the argument we have been drawing from our being the creatures of God, as truly as our first parents, to say, that the original depravity of our natures is derived from some irregularity in the animal frame. For not now to enquire into the propriety of deducing an effect of that kind from such a cause, are not our bodies too the workmanship of a divine hand? If so, the argument will still hold, that since we are as truly the creatures of God, as were our first parents, all the reasonings founded upon the divine perfections, from which it is infered, that they must have been made in his moral image, must have equal force in proving, that we likewise are made in that image.

That we really are, must surely be evident, from considering, in the SECOND place, what are the ends of our being, and what the duties required at our hands. Whatever they be, we cannot but conclude from the perfections of God, that we are, by the original constitution of our natures, in the best manner fitted for fulfilling them. This is observable in all other beings around us. Nay so admirably is every thing adjusted for answering its particular end in the creation, that it is from the perfect exactness with which the several parts of nature are adapted to such and such uses, that we infer what is their particular end. Hence arises, upon an extensive view of the divine works, in their just connection, that undeniable proof, which we have, of the creating power and presiding influences of an unerring and supremely gracious mind. What now upon these principles must we suppose man to be made for, according to the opinion of those who represent his nature as being, in its primary constitution,

tion, wholly averſe to what is virtuous and good? Muſt we not either conclude him to have been made for the practice of that vice, to which he is by the original affections of his nature ſo well diſpoſed: or elſe impute to the great Creator, and that with reſpect to the moſt eminent part of his creation here upon earth, the palpable abſurdity of creating with a determinate view to ſome particular end, and yet endowing the creature formed for that very end with diſpoſitions directly tending to defeat it? If then we ſuppoſe the reſt of mankind to be formed for the ſame ends, and for the enjoyment of the ſame happineſs, as was propoſed by the ſupreme Father of all in the creation of our firſt parents, how can we avoid diſcerning the utter impropriety of ſuppoſing at the very ſame time, that the original conſtitution of our minds ſhould be wholly different from that of theirs? How can we forbear to conclude, that it muſt be in general the ſame?

So far indeed ſeems to be allowed, even by thoſe who contend for the original viciousneſs of our natures, that conſcience

still subsists as a law in our minds. But if there be not likewise some other principles belonging to our internal frame, some natural affections upon which to ingraft our actual obedience to that law; if, on the contrary, every propensity belonging to our natures powerfully and incessantly impels us another way, to what can this law oblige us, but to the impossible task of making ourselves anew? A mere law itself does not confer any power to obey it; but certainly, under equitable government, it must suppose such a power in those who are obliged by it. A law of virtue and inclinations to vice, are directly repugnant to each other. To suppose therefore such a law and such inclinations to be equally *natural* to man, is to make the human nature a contradiction to itself. And shall such a workmanship ever be ascribed to a divine author? What inferences could we possibly draw from such a constitution with respect to the design of our own being? From such a *law* subsisting in our natures, we might indeed infer that we were made for virtue. But then
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from such *inclinations*, equally natural to the human constitution, we should much more strongly infer, that we were not made for virtue, but for the practice of vice.

But farther still: were the constitution of human nature so perverse as it is frequently said to be, so averse to good, so strongly inclining us to what is ill, how shall we be able to account for certain appearances in the actual condition of human affairs? That very temper, which exerted in lower instances and discovering itself in the more common effects of life, we call *humanity*, when carried to some sublime exalted heights of goodness, do we not universally agree to look upon as something *divine*? Do we not observe mankind universally agreeing to condemn vice in general, as being altogether *unnatural*? Are they not well known to mean by this a contrariety to some *natural* affection, and not merely to some *natural* law? Indeed how could such language ever have been thought of, had we been *by nature* wholly disposed to evil? Would men ever have consented to call that
unnatural,

unnatural, which they every day found to be agreeable to the original propensities of their own minds? In short, what can we say more of the sin of our first parents, than that it was *a contradiction to their natures*? And if by universal consent we say the same of our own, what does this imply, but the apprehension of one and the same nature common to them and to their posterity?

But besides this general consent of language, there are in the actual conduct of mankind the most incontestable proofs of a benevolence natural to humanity; and that wherever we turn our eyes, innumerable facts present themselves, which we can no otherwise account for than by supposing, that mankind are by nature formed with a good-will to one another. How indeed should we ever have thought of ascribing any natural good will or love of virtue to the first of human race, had we not discovered the like among the present generation of mankind? How came we to conclude, that the original parents of the human race had the same
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outward form and shape that we now have, but for this very reason, that such is *now* the form of man? Had ours been different, we should naturally have concluded theirs to have been so. In like manner, had there not been in the present and in the former generations of mankind, the evident marks of some kind affection, originally belonging to every man then or now existing, we should not once have thought of ascribing any such original affections to the first parents of the human race. No more should we have thought of this, than of their having been able to traverse the air with wings. And when we were told in scripture, that man was "*made in the image of God,*" we should naturally have confined the meaning of that expression to his intellectual powers, without the least apprehension of any other likeness.

It is indeed objected, that as our first parents did by their transgression corrupt their own natures, it was not possible that they should communicate any other than a corrupt nature to their posterity.

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This objection supposes the soul to be derived from our earthly parents in the same manner as is the body; a supposition that seems plainly repugnant to its spiritual nature. Accordingly the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expressly distinguishes between the "*fathers of our flesh*," and the "*father*" of our "*spirits*," manifestly excluding every earthly parent from having any right to this latter denomination. "*We have had*, says he, *fathers of our flesh and we gave them reverence; shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*" This then being the case, whatever mental depravity our first parents might contract by their fall, they could not communicate in any degree that depravity to other minds, which were in no sort derived from them*. But were we to wave this argument, yet is it to be observed, that if our

* Busbequius speaking of the Turks, expresses himself thus:—*Nec animam ex semine paterno fuscitari, ut filium patris similem nasci necesse sit, sed cœlitus in corpus infundi credunt.*—EPISTOL. I. p. 72.

first parents could not but have communicated those vicious principles of nature, which they themselves are supposed to have contracted by their fall, to their descendants, that is to all mankind, this unavoidable derivation of a corrupt nature to the whole human race must of necessity be owing to an established constitution of the Deity, and to the constant efficacy of his power, exerted according to this previously established law of providence. All, therefore, that has been already said, to shew that since we are the creatures of God, as truly as our first parents, we as well as they, must be made in the divine image; all the arguments I say, that have been already urged in proof of this assertion, must needs be equally conclusive against supposing that he should ever subject our being to such a law of derivation from another, as would necessarily involve in it an original corruption of mind inseparable from humanity.

But as the objection we are now considering supposes the original corruption of our natures to be the consequence of a
sinful

sinful nature introduced into the minds of our first parents by the fall, it will not be amiss to consider a little more particularly, *how far* they did in fact by that fall *corrupt their own natures*.

With respect to the conduct of mankind at present, it seems to be a maxim generally allowed, that nature cannot be absolutely overpowered. *Naturam expellas furca licet, usque recurret*. When we would describe the fullest influence of inveterate habits of vice, we say only in a way of comparison, that they are become a second nature. The very terms imply a primary nature still subsisting. And so far are we from supposing that the deepest habits of vice can bring about a real change of nature, that we condemn the vices even of the most inveterate sinner as being in every sense *unnatural*. Nay the more atrocious the vices, with so much the greater emphasis do we apply this censure. Even those who contend for the original corruption and depravity of human nature, are frequently known to use this very language, which seems to
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carry in it a plain enough acknowledgement of some latent principle at least of goodness still naturally belonging to the human mind, which, however feeble, cannot by any means whatsoever be totally eradicated. How dreadfully soever men may corrupt their minds by indulging themselves in habits directly repugnant to the suggestions of original nature, we never once apprehend the possibility of their substituting another nature in its room. And must we not presume the case to have been exactly the same with respect to our first parents? Do we not suppose, that their first offence was a contradiction to their natures? Can we imagine otherwise of the second or third? In short, to whatever degree we suppose them to have carried their transgression, must we not believe the very aggravation of this accumulated guilt to consist in its being a still more flagrant opposition to an original nature, which continued, notwithstanding, to be radically the same.

Should it then be allowed, that we must necessarily have received by communica-

tion from them some inherent principles of mind and temper, what principles, what affections, can we suppose would be the natural principles and the natural affections of the posterity, but such principles and affections as belonged to the original nature of the parents, and which, notwithstanding any superinduced habits of a contrary quality, still continued to be an essential property of it. It will, I suppose, be universally admitted, that our first parents did by their first offence, as truly contradict the principle of self-love implanted in their nature, as any of the moral kind belonging to it. But does it therefore follow, that by this offence they divested themselves of this principle of self-love, and that in consequence their offspring have ever since been born into the world without it? We see at present, that the human offspring is invariably endowed with the same original principles and passions as the parent, however the parent may in his person have deviated from these original principles of his nature, or neglected to cultivate these inbred affections of the human mind. At the

the same time we cannot but acknowledge, that there is by no means the same uniform similitude to his particular temper, or acquired dispositions. Besides, if in consequence of any natural necessity, a parent who has violated the law of virtue, must on that account only infuse corrupt principles into his posterity, one would be apt to imagine, that for the same general reason, the acting agreeably to that law should have at least an equal efficacy the contrary way; so that, whenever the virtues of a parent overbalance his vices, his posterity must needs be endowed with virtuous principles of nature. Thus the uninterrupted propagation of vice throughout the whole human race must appear to be an impossibility, even upon the principles of the objection itself. Or shall we suppose, that by the original constitution of things, it was made to be the peculiar privilege of vice, that it should have a power of being transfused from mind to mind successively, to the last of the human race, whilst the influence of virtue was in

this particular absolutely confined to the individual alone?

But it has been objected likewise, that, if human nature be not vitiated by the fall of our first parents, how shall we be able to account for the sufferings and death of infants? With respect to the former of these, I would observe, that the corrupt nature which we are supposed to bring into the world with us, must needs be a far greater misfortune than the pains of our infant state. In itself undoubtedly it is so; and it appears to be thought so by the objectors; since to this they impute all the irregularities of our succeeding life, and all the misfortunes that are consequent upon them. This corrupt nature, if such a nature does indeed subsist, must needs be ascribed to the agency of God, as much as the pains to which we are subject in our infancy, unless we will deny that God is our Creator. And must it not be infinitely more difficult to make the belief of such an original depravity in the mind of man consistent with the divine perfections, than it

it can be to reconcile to these perfections the transient pains of infancy, which have a natural tendency to engage the affections of parents and others in our behalf, and which stand in so close a connection with all the enjoyments both of this and a future state? Or how can we be said to solve one difficulty, only by advancing a far greater? To which we may add, that, admitting it to be true, that infants do indeed bring a vicious nature with them into the world, yet still it is a corruption to which they themselves have not in the least contributed by their own concurrence, but is entirely owing to the fault of another, for which it would be the highest absurdity to believe, that pains should be inflicted upon them. Though there be indeed frequent instances in the course of Divine Providence, in which one man's fault appears to be the occasion of another man's misfortune, yet it can never be alledged as the justifying reason, or exciting cause of it. These are always to be sought for, by enquiring into the good uses that may be answered by the misfortune itself.

So that the corruption of human nature, though admitted, can never be sufficient to account for the sufferings of infants; because it does not afford the least light, as to any good effects, that may be the consequence of those sufferings. It is only by pointing out such good effects, or by shewing that they may be fairly presumed to follow, though we cannot distinctly specify them, that these sufferings can be made to appear consistent with the perfections of a good and a wise Creator.

When we have once satisfied ourselves upon this point, it can be comparatively but of little importance, whether we come to any determination at all, as to the natural cause of them, so long as we are careful not to assign any that is itself inconsistent with those divine attributes which we attempt to vindicate. Thus, in the case of madness, or any bodily disorder, which seems to be derived from parents to their children; should any one from such instances take occasion to object either to the goodness or to the wisdom of Divine Providence, would it be sufficient to alledge

ledge in answer, that the parent's madness or distemper was the natural cause of the child's calamity? Would such an answer at all correspond to the design of the objection? In order to this, must we not either distinctly point out some wise ends, some merciful design to be answered by the calamity itself, or else shew, that on account of those direct proofs which we have of the divine perfections, arising from the general course of providence, there is sufficient reason for believing that some such wise and good purposes may and will in fact be answered by it, even though we cannot particularly discern them? When this was once done, the perfections of the Supreme Being would be fully justified, so far as relates to such a calamity, how ignorant soever we might be as to the natural or secondary causes of it.

With relation to *the death* of infants, it must, I think, be sufficient to ask; whether, at their departure out of this world, they are placed in a worse condition of being than would have been their lot had they continued in it? For if this be not the case,

case, it can then be no more difficult to account for their death, without having recourse to some original corruption of human nature, than it is to account for their birth. Since their *dying* out of this world, is indeed nothing more than their being *born* into another. If on the other hand their condition of being, upon their quitting this world, be worse than it would have been had they continued in it, that, and not the mere transition itself, will be the difficulty to be accounted for. It will be time enough to attempt the solution of it, when the thing itself is proved.

But as the sufferings and death of infants have sometimes been urged as an unanswerable proof of the corruption of our natures, so also have the forwardness and follies which sometimes discover themselves in children. Yet as mildness, gentleness, and meekness, are by far the more prevalent dispositions of these tender years, these, I think, must be allowed to be rather more convincing proofs, that our natures are not corrupted. It is likewise to be observed, that children are very early
capable

capable of imitation, much earlier, perhaps, than many of those about them seem to be aware. We may therefore reasonably suppose, that a great part of that irregularity in the temper of children, which is by many imputed to an original corruption of their minds, is indeed entirely owing to the corrupt example of those who attend upon them, or with whom they are daily conversant. To which let me add, that much of what is urged as a proof of their corrupted temper, is indeed no more than a proof of the weakness of their understandings. If they do mischief, it is oftentimes without the least design of doing it, and purely because of their utter ignorance concerning the tendency of the action whence the mischief arises. If they shew an eager desire of things which they ought not to have, how should they be able to judge whether such things are proper for them or not? And if through this weakness of their understanding they sometimes think themselves wronged and hardly dealt with, though in reality they are not; yet where can be the wonder at their

their expressing some resentment? Thus much will, I hope, suffice for obviating those objections that have been drawn from the state of infancy and childhood.

But what shall we say to the follies of riper years? What are we to think of that mutual invasion of property, that selfishness, pride, ambition, and covetousness, that envy and revenge, that tyranny on the one hand, that servile adulation on the other, those national feuds, civil wars, religious animosities, persecutions, inquisitions, and the remaining dreadful catalogue of enormities, that have in every age infested human life? Can *these* too be accounted for upon the principles we have been advancing, or be any way reconciled to that candid opinion of human nature which we have been endeavouring to establish? Let us try whether they can or no.

In order to make the trial impartially, let us not involve whole nations in absolute wickedness, merely on account of their differing from some other nations in their civil customs, in their religious rites, or in the
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the principles of their faith. Neither let us so fix our attention upon the follies and vices of mankind, as to forget those opposite virtues which have likewise appeared in every age of the world, and adorned every region of this earthly globe. Whilst we lament the fate of those numerous families that have been ruined by the extravagant ambition, or by the luxury of any who have belonged to them, let us not overlook those in which innocence and virtue, health, ease, and pleasure have their constant abode! Whilst we compassionate the distresses of those who have been sunk into the very depths of calamity by the injustice of others, let us not be unmindful of such as have been raised to eminent degrees of wealth and power, by the generous, disinterested, and unwearied goodness of human benefactors! When we take a view of those horrid desolations of states that have been introduced by lust of power, and tyrannic will, let us consider at the same time how long those very states had been before supported and made to flourish, by social order, wise œconomy, and

and the happy influences of a mild government! how completely also have others been rescued from the very borders of destruction, by that firm unanimity, that invincible ardour, that glorious resolution, which a love of religion, of virtue, of liberty, and of mankind, have inspired! Upon such an impartial view of human conduct, we shall perhaps see reason to conclude, that the wickedness of the world has not been in fact so great, as we must needs imagine it would have been, had men by the very *constitution of their natures* been prone to iniquity.

Suppose any one should take upon him to assert, that man was not by nature rational, should we not treat the assertion as being altogether chimerical, from a view of those various appearances in the conduct of mankind throughout every age, which could not possibly be accounted for upon any other supposition than this—that reason was a natural faculty in man. Yet there are, in reality, and ever have been, more numerous instances of mens' contradicting reason, than of their acting contrary

trary to the principles of virtue. Every irregularity, by which we act contrary to the principle of virtue, is likewise a contradiction to the dictates of reason, since that, if fairly consulted, would convince us that virtue was the only source of true felicity. Consequently the deviation would thus appear to be in both respects exactly equal. But then it must be vastly exaggerated on the side of reason by that amazing number of absurd opinions, which have been in every age and part of the world, and by the bulk of mankind, without hesitation espoused. Yet who has ever thought of deducing such opinions, or the follies of human conduct, from any natural principles of absurdity wrought into the very constitution of the human mind? Let men believe or act ever so irrationally, we still aver, that in so doing they act *contrary to nature*, still maintaining, that reason is *natural* to humanity. And what other account can be given of such an absurd belief or foolish conduct than this, that, though man be by nature rational, he must at the same time be

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supposed

supposed to be an imperfect creature, and therefore liable to err, capable of neglecting the use of his reason, and therefore of being imposed upon by partial views and fallacious appearances of things. In like manner, though man be by the natural principles of his mind well fitted for the practice of virtue, and for making godlike improvements in it; yet, being by nature imperfect, he must be supposed capable of neglecting the right use of these his inward powers and native affections. When such negligence has been *once* indulged, the mind is naturally prepared, in some slight degree, for the continuance of it. And thus, at length, custom and habit may carry men to the most extravagant and enormous pitch of vice; whilst every offender is encouraged by innumerable examples of the like kind in others*.

Nor

* *To walk with God* (says Mr. Baxter in his *Divine Life*, Part II. c. vi. § 2. p. 236) *in a holy, heavenly conversation*, is the employment most *suitable to human nature*. Not to its corrupt disposition, nor to the carnal interest and appetite, but to *nature as nature, to man*

Nor let any one imagine that this must, after all, amount in effect to what we have been endeavouring to disprove. For is there no difference between an actual propensity to evil, belonging to the very constitution of our minds, and the

man as man. It is the very work that he was made for. The faculties and frame of soul and body were composed for it by the wise Creator. They are restored for it by the gracious Redeemer. Though in corrupted nature, where sensuality is predominant, there is an estrangedness from God, and an enmity and hatred of him; so that the wicked are more averse to all serious holy converse with him (in prayer, contemplation, and a heavenly life,) than they are to a worldly sinful life: yet all this is but the *disease* of *nature* corrupting its appetite, and turning it against that proper food which is most suitable to its sound desires, and necessary to its health and happiness. Though sinful habits are become as it were a second nature to the ungodly, so depraving their judgments and desires, that they verily think the business and pleasures of the flesh are most suitable to them, yet these are as contrary to *nature as nature*; that is, to the primitive tendency of all our faculties, and the proper use to which they were fitted by our Creator, and to that true felicity which is the end of all our parts and powers, even as *madness* is contrary to the *rational nature* though it were hereditary.

being endowed with the direct contrary dispositions of nature, though still with a power of neglecting, if we please, the due cultivation of them, and giving ourselves up to a wilful perversion of our own natures? Can it be the same, or nearly the same thing, whether our duty to God and to mankind, together with our own happiness, consist in being governed by the natural dictates of our own minds, or in a continued opposition to them? Can it be equally consonant to the perfections of God, whether his creature man be formed with inclinations to virtue, or with inclinations to vice? Does a mere capacity to sin bear the same unfavourable aspect upon our improvements in virtue, as an actual inherent, natural propensity to sin? Or to recur to our former illustration—Do we reject the gift of reason, because it does not make us infallible? Whilst we acknowledge man, through the imperfection of his being, to be liable to error, do we not still think it of high importance to look upon him as being by nature rational, and to assert his dignity in that respect?

respect? And can his dignity be less affected by his moral than by his intellectual constitution? Is there no proper medium between describing man as naturally vicious, and the representing him as being by nature absolutely perfect? Exactly such a one as there is in the other case, between ascribing to human nature as such either absolute infallibility, or the very idiotism of folly. Will not the observing such a medium, with respect to our moral constitution, at once vindicate the character of man, as standing foremost amongst the works of God here upon earth, and at the same time account for his vices? Why then should we fear to conclude, that virtue is as *natural* to mankind as reason?

But some will perhaps alledge, that as there appears to be in the conduct of mankind so great a mixture of virtue and of vice, the medium we have been speaking of must surely consist in a mixture of virtuous and vicious principles originally belonging to human nature. But let it be considered, that as the two principles

of virtue and vice are directly opposite to each other, it is impossible that *both* of them should *correspond* to the end of our being; that which ever of them we suppose to be agreeable to that end, the other must of course have a natural tendency to defeat it. That two such principles therefore should both of them originally belong to our natures, can by no means be admitted, if indeed man be the offspring of God, and made for any end at all, since one of them must at least be useless; nay more, must directly tend to destroy the effect of the other. If God our creator be a wise being, it cannot be thought that he should thus operate in vain; or rather, that he should thus counteract his own designs. And if he be a good being, man must be formed for virtue, and consequently there cannot be in his internal frame any natural propensity to evil. In the real constitution of man there are indeed the two different principles of benevolence, and of self-love. But though these be different, they are not opposite principles. The respective
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ends of each may therefore possibly be made to coincide. This is in fact the case with respect to man, as must needs be allowed by all who suppose virtue to be the happiness of man. And it furnishes us with an eminent instance, with a striking proof of the wisdom and goodness of God, the supreme Former of our spirits!

But these are reflections which naturally lead us to observe farther, that the excess of innocent and useful passions will account for vice, though the excess of bad ones can never possibly produce virtue. Thus for instance, self-love, love of power, emulation, and natural indignation on account of injuries received; together with the several appetites of sense, when carried beyond certain limits, produce selfishness, pride, ambition, envy, revenge, and sensuality. Indeed what vice is there to be named which does not appear to be either the excess or the abuse of some natural power, passion, or appetite, which, when operating in its just degree, and after a due manner, is of manifest importance to all the purposes both of private
happiness

happiness and social life? But what could the excess of these vicious passions themselves, supposing them to have originally belonged to our natures, have produced but more vice? What is the excess of selfishness, of pride, of envy, of revenge, and sensuality, but still greater depravity and malignity of character in these several instances. Nay, the mere neglecting only to cultivate virtuous dispositions, supposing them to be natural to the human mind, will account for vice. Such a neglect must needs give to some selfish passion or another, the ascendancy in the soul, and in that very ascendancy will consist immorality and guilt. And in proportion to the degree of superiority which such a selfish passion, through the neglect only of cultivating the better principles of our nature, acquires in the heart, will be the sacrifice made of these better principles of justice, of integrity, of truth and benevolence to its gratification and indulgence. Whereas, supposing any natural disposition to vice belonging to the human mind, the neglecting to cherish such a disposition

disposition will not account for virtue. The very best effect that could possibly proceed from such a neglect, would be only a less degree of vice. So that whilst there appears an absolute necessity of having recourse to some natural principle of virtue, in order to account for mens' virtuous conduct, there does not appear to be the same necessity of having recourse to any vicious principle of nature, in order to account for their vices. Accordingly, though it be allowed on all hands, and even contended for, that the first parents of the human race were absolutely free from all original propensities to vice, yet did they transgress. Where then can be the necessity, where the advantage, where the use of introducing the supposition of any such *natural viciousness* of mind in their POSTERITY? Even those who with the greatest zeal insist upon the original viciousness of the human mind in general, do still seem to allow, that the parental tenderness is an affection natural to humanity. Yet how frequently is it contradicted? Notwithstanding this, how
wife

wife and useful a part must we believe it to be in the constitution of the human nature? "The case of the angels" likewise, "who in" such "numbers *sinned* " *and kept not their first estate,*" is in reference to this point very justly insisted upon by Dr. Taylor. "For this makes it, as " he says, undeniably evident, that sin-
"ning in the degree of Adam's guilt,
"or in that of the angels—would not
"prove that the nature of mankind is
"originally corrupt." This excellent observation is in my edition of the Dr.'s Supplement to his Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, crowded into a small list of errata and addenda. Not knowing of any other in which it has been rescued from this obscurity, I was willing to remind my reader of it here, lest haply it should be overlooked.

In short, whether we suppose mankind to be naturally disposed to virtue, or whether we suppose them to be naturally prone to sin, there is in life such a mixture of both, that there must either way be a great deviation from nature. It seems,
likewise,

likewise, that it must be altogether as difficult to account for mens' virtuous conduct, upon the supposition of a corrupt nature in man, as it can be to account for their vices upon the supposition of a nature belonging to him that is innocent, pure, and friendly to all virtue. For even religion itself can have no power over a mind that is *naturally indisposed* to receive its influences. The case being thus, can we hesitate a moment which of these two hypotheses to prefer? Does it not, upon the whole, manifestly appear, that there is no possible way of reconciling the notion of the original corruption of our natures to the perfections of God, but by supposing that he is *not* in reality *the author of our being*? And this would, in effect, destroy the very proof of those perfections themselves. For if we can account for our own existence without his agency, why not, in the very same manner, for every thing around us? Thus, for the sake of supporting a particular tenet in religion, we should sap the foundation of *all* religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

MANKIND NOW CREATED IN THE
IMAGE OF GOD—OLD TESTAMENT
EXAMINED, OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IT may however be alledged, that whatsoever vain officious reason may be able to suggest, the SCRIPTURE itself has plainly declared against that very sentiment, which we have all this while been endeavouring to support. Let us therefore go on to examine the force of this objection. And as in this attempt we shall, at least in our own apprehension, be doing honour to the scriptures, and rescuing them from abuse, so one would gladly hope that the insisting thus particularly upon each distinct branch of our proposed subject may be the means of rendering our sense of that capital truth in morality and religion, which we have undertaken to defend, more permanent and lively, consequently

consequently more efficacious for the improvement of our tempers, and for quickening our virtuous progress. One great reason, undoubtedly, why truths which have in their own nature the most happy tendency to purify our souls, and to cherish every virtuous and godlike disposition, have in reality so little effect of that kind, is, that we believe them only *by halves*. We are either too sluggish, or else too fond of novelty, in some cases perhaps a little too much intimidated by the awe of human authority, to adhere to our inquiries, or pursue conviction to the utmost. This we are apt to excuse by the plausible pretence of making a kind of reconciliation between opinions that are in fact directly contradictory to each other. Whereas, in truth, the only possible, as well as by far the most important union among christians, is not an uniformity of opinions, much less of forms of worship, but that *reconciliation of hearts, that unity of affection*, which would effectually secure the harmony of society, though the greatest diversity of speculation should

still remain. We may therefore, without at all fearing to violate the laws of christian unity, enter upon the strictest inquiry into the idea that is in scripture given us of human nature. Let us begin with the OLD TESTAMENT.

Under this head it is natural to observe, first, that in the book of Genesis itself, in which the first parents of the human race are described as being made in the image of God, the succeeding race of mankind are spoken of under the very same terms. "*Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he, or he, that is, God, has made man;*" whose life, therefore, or abode in this world, it would be the highest absurdity to suppose he should have subjected, in the case of any one individual whatsoever, to the caprice or extravagant passion of others, in such a manner as to give every one a right to take away the life of his neighbour, whenever his revenge should prompt him to it, or his interest seem to demand it. But had Moses apprehended, that there was such a vast difference between

tween the first parents of the human race and their whole posterity, as that, though the former were indeed created in the image of God's moral excellencies, as well as of his intelligence, wisdom and power, yet the latter had intirely lost this moral image of their Maker, and were by nature wholly depraved, and that the same would be true of all the succeeding generations of mankind to the end of the world, is it possible to imagine that he should have expressed himself in the very same terms, with reference to the original formation of both? Does not the sameness of the language, on the contrary, most evidently imply that he entertained the same general notion concerning the constitution of human nature, after the fall of our first parents, as he supposed to be true concerning it before. That he did so, is greatly confirmed by observing farther, that when he speaks of a dominion over the inferior creatures as belonging to mankind, after the fall of our first parents, he expresses himself in terms rather more emphatical, and more extensive, (as must

be evident to every one who will make the comparison,) than occur in his first account of the creation of man, and of the privileges with which he was originally invested. Whereas, had he supposed any such change in the nature of man, any such natural corruption of the human species, derived to the whole succeeding race from the first parents of it, as has by many been imagined, nothing could have been more natural than to suppose too, that this dominion over the inferior creatures should have undergone a proportionable diminution, and that Moses would have expressed himself accordingly.

It has, I know, been alledged, that in the book of Job, of which Moses is by some thought to have been the author, this corruption of human nature is plainly enough asserted. "*Who,*" it is asked by Job, in the fourteenth chapter of that book, "*can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*" Again by Eliphaz in the fifteenth chapter; "*What is man, that he should be clean? And he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?*" In the

the words immediately following this last-cited passage it is observed, that even "the heavens, that is, the inhabitants of heaven, the angels, "are not clean in the "sight of God." So that, if from one of these passages it must be inferred, that human nature is originally corrupt, from the other so directly following, it must needs be inferred, that this is equally true of the angelic. When therefore Job is introduced as saying in vindication of himself; "*Who can bring a clean thing out of "an unclean?"*" and Eliphaz as admitting the sentiment, intended in the question by asking, "*What is man that he should be "righteous?"*" It is evident that these passages refer to that *imperfection*, which undeniably appears to be the general condition of humanity, and from which therefore it would be highly unreasonable to expect, that any individual should be exempted. But surely an imperfection, which is in some sense to be imputed to the angels themselves, who, as it is expressed in another part of this book of Job, may, when compared with the infi-

nately glorious and all-perfect Deity, be "*charged with folly*;" surely, I say, such an imperfection is a thing totally different from an original depravity of nature. If any inference at all can be made, with reference to such an original corruption of nature, from the observation, that *a clean thing* cannot be produced from an *unclean one*, it must undoubtedly be this; that as God the creator of man is infinitely pure and holy, it cannot possibly be imagined, in consistency with this acknowledged purity and perfection of the divine character, that MAN, the offspring of divinity, should be made by the very constitution of his nature averse to all moral righteousness, but strongly prone to sin. For if it be true, that a clean thing cannot be produced out of an unclean one, the proposition reversed must be equally true likewise, and it must be alike impossible, that an unclean thing should be produced out of that which is clean.

But does not David say, that he was "*shapen in iniquity, and that in sin his mother conceived him*?" He does, and if this be true

true of David, must it not be true also of mankind in general? If it refers to any original corruption of his nature, undoubtedly it must. It is indeed observed by David himself in another psalm, that "*the wicked are estranged from the womb, and that they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.*" An observation which, as it refers in express terms to so great a number of our species, would, I think, be rather a more direct argument in proof of the natural and universal corruption of mankind, than the other so much more frequently alledged in support of it, in which the Psalmist's mode of expression is purely personal, were it not for the concluding words of this last-cited passage, which plainly imply, that no such meaning was intended. For can we suppose, that David believed men to be capable of "*speaking lies*" before they were capable of speaking at all? If one of these passages then is only to be understood as a strong and figurative mode of expression intended to denote, and after a lively manner to exhibit the heinousness of men's actual transgressions,

transgressions, why may not the other be understood in the same sense? and this especially, as it occurs in a penitential psalm, in which it is natural to suppose that the Psalmist would rather think of painting the aggravations of his own personal guilt in the strongest colours, than of suggesting any thing that would look so much like extenuating it, as that sentiment which his words are by many supposed to express. But it is to be observed farther, that Job, in the book which bears his name, is represented as saying that he had *guided* the widow, the poor forlorn and destitute widow, from his mother's womb. Now, if the expression of David implies an original depravity of nature, these words of Job must equally imply an original goodness of nature; an original inclination to kindness and compassion. Thus an argument against the original depravity of human nature would arise from one of these passages, with a conviction, at least equal to the strength of the argument, which would arise from the other in favour of it.

As

As Job, however, is universally understood to mean no more than a constant readiness to befriend the distressed, so far as he was capable of doing this, and as soon as he became so, what necessity can we be under to interpret the words of David otherwise, than as intended to express the deep sense he had of the malignity of the crime he there laments? As if he had said, "Were such a thing any way possible, I could even believe myself to have been born with a propensity to sin. So horrid and enormous has been my crime." Among ourselves, also, how common is it for men to charge themselves with the folly of some particular action by saying, "Surely I was mad, surely I was out of my senses or bewitched?" not strictly meaning any thing like this, but only to magnify their own folly to the utmost. Upon this idea we may suppose the Psalmist, in the immediately following verse to correct himself, *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* "Whatever
"exaggerating

“ exaggerating language the sense of my
“ most horrid guilt may have extorted
“ from me, yet in the calm convictions of
“ my mind, I am deeply sensible of it, as
“ a most certain truth, that far from being
“ shapen in iniquity, or conceived in sin
“ by the very make of my own nature,
“ and the tendency of all its powers, I
“ may easily discern the practice of truth
“ and sincerity, and universal virtue to
“ be thy will. Yet unfortunate enough
“ surely my mother, to bring into the
“ world the man that could actually be
“ guilty of such enormous crimes.”

So far however was Solomon, the son
of this royal Psalmist, from entertaining
any thought or apprehension of the ori-
ginal corruption of human nature, that he
expressly lays it down as a maxim result-
ing from all his observations upon the
conduct of mankind, that “ God made
“ mankind in general *upright*, but that
“ they, they themselves, the very persons
“ whom God had made upright, had,
“ through their wilful deviation from the
“ original principles of their own nature,
“ fought

“fought out many inventions.” These are, I think, the principal, if not all, the passages in the historical, poetical, or moral books of the Old Testament, which either have, or are by any supposed to have, a more immediate connection with the subject under consideration.

Were we now to inquire what sentiments might be collected concerning it from the writings of the ancient prophets; it is well known how great a part of them consist in solemnly reprovng the vices of the times in which they lived, and in earnest exhortations to repentance and amendment. And it is to be remembered, not only that all their persuasions to repentance are founded upon men's personal transgressions, but likewise all their lamentation at the triumphant wickedness of the age, is founded upon the extent of this personal corruption, and upon the strength of long inveterate habits of vice; and that they never once give the least intimation of any *natural* corruption in the heart of man. From this silence we must conclude, either that
believing

believing such a natural depravity, they prudentially concealed the opinion, from an apprehension that it could not possibly be made subservient to any moral purposes; or else that they had, in fact, no thought of any such thing. But which ever way we determine in the case, this at least must be admitted, that their writings cannot possibly afford any argument in favour of it. The prophet Jeremiah does indeed say, that "*the heart of man is deceitful, and desperately wicked.*" In the chapter wherein these words occur, he is cautioning men against having too implicit a reliance upon others, and confiding too much in their professions of friendship. And it is evident, that according to this connection the observation is perfectly just, though we suppose it only to refer to the present temper of so great a part of mankind, who by dissimulation conceal their real intention, that so they may the more effectually impose upon us, and make the confidence we have placed in them subservient to their own iniquitous measures. Thus much may suffice in

order to shew, that there is not any thing in the writings of the Old Testament, that is in the least degree inconsistent with the principle we have undertaken to defend, namely, that it is alike true of the whole race of mankind, as it was of our first parents, that they are made in the image of God's moral perfections.

CHAP. IV.

MANKIND NOW CREATED IN THE IMAGE
OF GOD—NEW TESTAMENT EXAMIN-
ED, OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

LET us in the next place inquire, whether or no this sentiment be agreeable to the doctrines of the christian religion. It has been said, and by Mr. Locke in the very first sentence of his reasonableness of christianity, “ that the doctrine of the “ gospel is founded upon the supposition “ of Adam’s fall.” From whence he

infers, that “ to understand what we are
“ restored to by Jesus Christ, we must
“ consider what the scripture shews we
“ lost by Adam.” Yet it is observable,
that our Saviour himself never takes the
least notice of Adam’s fall, not in any of
his instructions or exhortations to the
multitude ; not in any of his more private
discourses with his disciples, either before
or after his resurrection ; not in any of his
prayers or addresses to the sovereign Deity.
Strange and unaccountable this ! that the
author of our religion should forget the
foundation of his own system, or omit to
lay it. Will it not be more modest and
far more consistent with that honour
which is due to *his* character, as the great
prophet of God most high, and as the
“ *Author and Finisher*” of our christian
“ faith,” to conclude from his passing
over this fall of Adam in absolute silence,
that he looked upon it as a remote fact or
distant event, in which mankind had little
or no concern. Indeed supposing our first
parents had never fell, there would cer-
tainly have been the same possibility that
some

some of their descendants should transgress, as there was that *they* should. And what, if some of the succeeding generations of mankind, who have ever been imitating the folly of their first progenitors, had instead of them been the first offenders, and vice thus introduced had continually gained ground, and at length spread to the same extent and advanced to the same height, as in fact it had at the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world, would not THE GOSPEL, in that case, have been as great a blessing as it is at present? Would not the ends and uses of it have been the same; equally wise and gracious? Accordingly we find, that our blessed Saviour, throughout the whole course of his preaching, constantly establishes the benefit of his doctrine, the necessity and importance of his appearance in the world, not upon any concern that we have in any prior transgression, not upon any original depravity of nature, but upon the actual corruption and degeneracy of the world, and upon the tendency of his doctrine not only to put a

stop to the flagrant enormities of human conduct, but likewise to improve and refine our tempers.

Indeed, as the professed design of our Saviour's coming into the world was to reform the manners and purify the hearts of men, nothing could have been more directly inconsistent with that design, than to begin with informing them, that by the very constitution of their natures they were utterly averse to that virtue, the practice of which he was come into the world on purpose to recommend and to encourage. Virtue may justly be considered as the art or science of living well. And how amazingly preposterous should we think it in the professed teachers of any other art or science, were they to begin their lectures with assuring their pupils that they were *by nature* utterly disqualified for making any attainments in it? If they believed him, it would be more than enough to discourage all their endeavours. If they thought fit to dissent from his opinion, it would naturally dispose them to entertain a very contemptible
idea

idea of his prudence, and strongly to suspect his qualifications for a master. Nothing, however, of this kind is chargeable upon our divine master CHRIST JESUS. So far was he from erecting the triumphs of his religion upon the ruins of nature, as has been by some warm professors of it unhappily attempted, that, on the contrary, he expressly assures us, that “*no man can come unto him, unless the father, who hath sent him draw him.*” The meaning of which declaration I suppose to be this—that no man can have a just relish for the excellent truths and sublime views of christianity, unless he be in some measure influenced by those *natural* principles of religion and virtue which have been implanted in the heart of man by the supreme Father of all intelligent creatures; according to whose appointment our blessed Lord appeared in the world, as the Saviour and Redeemer of it.

But how far THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION is from countenancing the belief of any original corruption of human nature, derived from the sin of our first parents,

will be seen with the greatest clearness in what our great instructor has so expressly declared with respect to little children. Having introduced one of these of tender years into the company of his twelve disciples, he addresses himself to them with particular solemnity in these words: "*Verily, I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" So that conversion, according to the doctrine of our blessed Lord, does not consist in resisting nature, or in overcoming any supposed corruption originally belonging to our minds, but in returning to nature, after we have revolted from it, through wilful negligence and a perverse abuse of our own faculties. And whether in this passage, we understand by the kingdom of heaven the gospel institution, or that future kingdom of glory for which it was designed to prepare us, it would either way reflect the highest dishonour upon the character of our blessed Saviour to imagine, that he would have represented a likeness to little children as the qualification

qualification for entering into it, had he believed that they are by NATURE "*wholly disposed to evil, and averse to all that is virtuous and good.*" Nor can the propriety of the maxim, which in these words he advances, be any otherwise made to appear than upon the direct contrary supposition; that they are indeed entirely free from all original turpitude, and endowed with natural propensities inclining them to virtue, and with natural powers qualifying them for the practice of it.

But I should by no means do justice to the present argument, did I not go on to observe, that our Saviour did likewise, upon another occasion, inculcate the very same maxim. For when some little children were brought to him, that he might "*lay his hands upon them and heal them,*" his disciples endeavoured to discourage those who brought them, from making their intended application to him. But our Saviour reprov'd them for this, saying, "*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever*"
"*shall*"

"shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in nowise enter therein."

And it is to be remembered, that both these particulars of our Saviour's history are distinctly recorded by *three* of the evangelists. We cannot, therefore, but look upon it to be a most important and conspicuous doctrine of the gospel, that the original constitution of the human mind is so far from being corrupt, that it is indeed the very ground-work of that virtuous temper, without which we can neither approve ourselves the genuine disciples of Christ, nor become qualified for participating in the felicities of the heavenly kingdom.

But there is another part of the evangelical history which is full to our present purpose. It is the very remarkable conversation which passed between our blessed Saviour and some Pharisees and Herodians, who joined together in proposing a question to him, that they might the more effectually ensnare him in his answer. Though it be not very clear, whether the Herodians were a political or a religious sect,

fect, yet it is evident they differed from the Pharisees, in supposing it lawful for the Jews to submit themselves to the Roman government. This the Pharisees denied, grounding their opinion upon a passage in the book of Deuteronomy, in which it is thus decreed: "*Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall chuse. One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.*" There were some however, of both these parties, who agreed in endeavouring to entangle our Saviour in such a manner as might, they hoped, at once injure his character, and put an effectual stop to his preaching. The question, which for this purpose they jointly proposed to him, was this, "*Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? shall we give, or shall we not give?*" Upon which he desired that the tribute-money, (which was a piece of Roman coin, called in our translation a penny, but amounting to the value of several of our pence) might be shewn him. When brought to him
he

he asked, "*Whose image and superscription is this?*" This he did for the sake of introducing his intended answer in the most convincing manner. Accordingly when they told him that it was Cæsar's, he immediately subjoins, "*Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.*" Words which are not capable of any interpretation, that can in the least discredit our Saviour's doctrine, or throw the smallest blemish upon his character, which yet either party might understand as carrying in them a declaration in favour of their own opinion upon the question.

The *Pharisees*, for instance, might consider our Saviour as speaking to this purpose: "This is Cæsar's money, which the triumphs of a foreign enemy have made current in this once free nation: scorn to have any thing to do with so notorious a badge of servility and subjection to the Roman government; let Cæsar take back his coin, and with it that usurped authority which first introduced it among you." On the other hand, the *Herodians* might understand him

as

as speaking to this effect, "This is Cæsar's
 " coin; and for those who acknowledge
 " his authority among you to be just, it
 " must surely be lawful to discharge the
 " appointed tribute with a part of it."
 In which ever of these senses the words
 are understood, the sentiment they express
 must appear to be perfectly unexception-
 able. In the former they will be a just
 and lively declaration against the encroach-
 ments of tyranny, and the inhuman tri-
 umphs of the sword, and thus exactly
 harmonize with the sentiment inculcated
 by our Saviour upon another occasion;
 " *The kings of the earth exercise dominion,*
 " *but it shall not be so among you.*" In the
 other sense, they amount to no more than
 the allowing persons to act according to
 the conviction of their own minds, even
 though their judgment happens to be
 erroneous, without at all countenancing
 the error itself, or any of those criminal
 passions and views from whence it may
 possibly have arisen. Thus, by an ambi-
 guity, perfectly innocent and consistent
 with the greatest purity both of sentiment
 and

and character, did our Saviour treat a captious question with the contempt it deserved, avoiding at the same time the snare itself, and the dilemma into which his adversaries intended to bring him, either of exposing himself to the resentment of the Roman government, or else, of forfeiting the reputation he had acquired among the people.

Nor could these very persons themselves forbear admiring that quick discernment which appeared in this answer, and by which their malicious intentions were so effectually baffled. "*When they heard these words*, the Evangelist tells us, *they marvelled.*" We may, however, well presume, that their admiration was not a little heightened by observing with what propriety our Saviour improved this conversation into an occasion of inculcating upon his hearers those important and sublime sentiments, which are contained in the latter part of the passage referred to: "*Render unto God, the things which are God's.*" In order to the right understanding of which words, we are, it is evident,

evident, to suppose our Saviour putting the same question to his hearers with respect to their own *minds*, as he put to the Pharisees and Herodians about the coin which they shewed him, "*Whose image and superscription is this?*" To this question, those who strangely lay the foundation of religion in the wickedness of our natures, must answer, the devil's. By which of course they would absolutely destroy the ground of the exhortation given by our Saviour in this latter part of his answer to these Pharisees and Herodians. For according to the connection, the duty of "*rendering unto God the things that are God's,*" is apparently founded upon this supposition; that the mind of man is not only derived from God, but is likewise as truly formed in the image of God, as the coin was in that of Cæsar's. From whence it immediately follows, that we are by our inward constitution as well fitted for the service of God, as that coin was for answering such ends and uses in Cæsar's government, as he should appoint. It is for this reason only, that our Saviour

could upon such an occasion, and in such a connection as has just now been pointed out, call a life of religion and virtue, the "*rendering unto God the things that are God's.*" In this animated and striking manner does he assert *the image of God in man!*

The same apprehensions of the dignity of human nature, are sufficiently apparent in the writings of the Apostles. For we find St. Paul exhorting the Corinthians, that "*in malice,*" that is, in wickedness, for the original word implies vice of any kind or degree, they should "*be children.*" The plain meaning of his exhortation is, that they should aim at a perfect purity of heart. This he calls being *like children*, evidently supposing human nature in its original state, and before it be corrupted by negligence and vicious habits, to be intirely free from every moral taint. But were we to suppose it so depraved, as is by many represented, the words of the Apostle must then be understood as recommending wickedness, instead of dissuading from it. It is in the seventh chapter

chapter of the same first epistle to the Corinthians, that the same Apostle, speaking of man, describes him in these terms ; “ *Who is the image and the glory of God ?* ”

What can we conceive that could have been more dreadfully profane, had he looked upon mankind to be *by nature* inclined to vice ? What does his language amount to, upon this supposition, but to an imputation of the very same character only in an infinitely higher degree, to the divine being himself ? But as the CHRISTIAN RELIGION teaches us to place the supreme glory of the Deity in his moral excellencies, when man is said by the Apostle to be at once the “ *image and the glory of God,* ” we must necessarily understand him as speaking of the image of these moral excellencies belonging to man as man, distinguishing his nature and primary character.

In the very same manner the Apostle St. James expresses himself concerning mankind. For speaking of the licentiousness of the tongue, he says, “ *Therewith*

“ *bless we God, even the Father, and there-*

“ *with curse we men, who are made after the
“ similitude of God.*” That these words
must necessarily be supposed to refer to
the image of God’s moral perfections is
plain, because the divine similitude here
spoken of, is the similitude of that *which
we bless in God.* Now what is it that we
bless, when we offer up our hymns of
praise to God, but his moral perfections;
his mercy, grace and goodness, included
in this very passage, under the appellation
of Father? It is therefore in *the image* of
this divine goodness that man is created,
according to the express sentiment of St.
James. And this must necessarily imply,
not only the exclusion of all corrupt prin-
ciples from the constitution of his nature,
but likewise some inherent dispositions to
virtue essentially belonging to it. For if
the absence merely of vicious principles
could lay a sufficient foundation for saying
of man, that he is made in the image of
God’s moral perfections, then the same
might with equal truth be affirmed of any
inanimate being whatsoever. For the
same reason too we might be said to have
been

been made in the image of the divine intelligence, merely because we are not by nature fools.

These are undeniable proofs, drawn from the assertions of our Saviour and his Apostles, that man is by *nature* made in *the image of God*. And we must, I think, before we can admit the doctrine of the original corruption of human nature, either deny the possibility of understanding the very plainest expressions that language can supply us with, or else suppose, that God is indeed a being of that cruel and revengeful nature, which has to the infinite dishonour of religion been sometimes ascribed to him. Upon this supposition indeed, horrible to be mentioned, (how much more so to be admitted) the greater degree of corruption we impute to the human nature, the more easily shall we discover in it the image of the divine!

But does not the Apostle expressly say, that, "*We are all by nature the children of wrath?*" I answer, no: there is no such assertion any where to be met with in the New Testament. He speaks of *some* that

“ *were,*” or had been, “ *by nature the children of wrath.*” And who were they? Why, the Ephesian converts, who, according to the tenor of their former conduct, had been “ *dead in trespasses and sins,*” and “ *walked,*” a phrase necessarily implying actual transgression, “ *according to the course,*” or fashion, “ *of this world.*” Of these he affirms, that they were, or had been, whilst they continued in that *course*, and in consequence of their being “ *children of disobedience, by nature children of wrath.*” But by this undoubtedly he meant, that so long as they continued in that *course* of disobedience, they were the *natural objects* of the divine wrath and punishment. *By nature*, that is according to *the nature* of God’s essential perfections, according to the established order of his moral government, of which they, by the natural powers of their own being, had been constituted subjects, such a depraved state of mind could not but during the continuance of it, have rendered them obnoxious to his severest displeasure.

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But does not the same Apostle assert, that "*By one man sin entered into the world.*" This is indeed his assertion. And is it not common to say of any general practice or prevailing custom, that such or such a one introduced it? And that this is what St. Paul here meant by saying, that "*By one man sin entered into world,*" is plain from what immediately follows in the same verse: "*and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" It is evident, that the death of mankind in general is not here imputed to one man's transgression, but to the general sinfulness of the world, as the cause or rather as the occasion and reason of it. So far is the Apostle from supposing in this passage, that the sin of our first parents was the ground or reason of the universal mortality of the human race, that he supposes it on the contrary directly to follow from this universal mortality, that "**ALL**" must needs have "*sinned.*" "*Death passed upon all men for that,*" or rather, for which reason "*all have sinned:*" that is, from this universal mortality of mankind
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we might most certainly conclude, (were there no other proof of it) that "*all have sinned.*" This amounts exactly to the same thing as if he had said, "The universal prevalence of sin is the true account to be given of the universal prevalence of mortality." This is the very thought he enlarges upon in the two following verses, expressly insisting upon it, that since "*death reigned*" over mankind "*from Adam to Moses,*" even though they had not "*sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,*" there must necessarily have been a law in being prior to that of Moses, meaning the law of nature, which mankind in general had violated, though perhaps, in no instance whatsoever exactly after the same manner in which it had been violated by the first parents of the human race.

What is this but deducing, in the plainest terms, the death of mankind previous to the institution of the Mosaic law, not from the sin of one man separately and alone considered, but from the general corruption that had prevailed throughout the

the human species? But if it be true that "*death passed upon all men,*" because "*all have sinned,*" it cannot be true likewise that it has passed upon all men, because one only had offended. So that when the Apostle says, that death "*entered into the world by one man,*" or "*by the offence*" of one man, he can surely mean no more than that this one man, as he was the first offender, became likewise the first victim of death, the first instance of human mortality, from whom, according to an established law of nature, it was derived to all his posterity. By virtue of this previously established law, the mortality of Adam became the natural means, or secondary cause, of that universal mortality that has overspread the human race; whilst the moral reason of this law itself, that which made it suitable to the divine perfections to establish it, was not the single offence of Adam, but the foreseen corruption of the world in general. The final cause or moral reason of this or that particular constitution in nature is one thing, the secondary cause of it, or the mean appointed

pointed in the plan of providence for producing and maintaining it, wholly another. And to both of these the Apostle, taking occasion in this chapter to speak of human mortality, does evidently refer.

Between the universal corruption of mankind, and their universal mortality, there is a most kind and merciful connection. And according to an original law of nature, this *universal mortality* has been propagated from the first parent of our race. He likewise being the first offender of human kind, did of course set the first example of vice, and open a way for its farther progress. So that as by him in the sense that has been now assigned, death came into the world, of him it may be most truly said, likewise in a sense somewhat, though by no means strictly analogous, that "*by him sin entered into the world.*" St. Paul likewise observes in the same chapter, that by the "*disobedience of one, many were made, or became sinners;*" but then he immediately adds, that "*by the obedience of one, that is, Christ, many were made righteous.*" Now could
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any be made righteous by the obedience of Christ, otherwise than in consequence of the moral influence which the knowledge of his obedience, and of the doctrines it was intended to confirm, must have had upon their minds? How then, to make any thing of a parallel, can we suppose, that “ *by the disobedience of one many were made sinners* ;” meaning by that one, the first offender of the human race, otherwise than by the influence which this example must necessarily have had towards propagating vice amongst mankind? Besides, as none can possibly be made righteous by the obedience of Christ, but those who are acquainted with the history of that obedience, or in other words, those who have a knowledge of the gospel, (whence that high necessity of faith so often insisted upon in the Gospel itself, in order to our partaking in the saving benefits of it) to suppose that the alledged natural corruption of all mankind was the consequence of the first human transgression, would be making that transgression to have both a far greater, and a more extensive efficacy towards

towards the propagation of vice, than the obedience of Christ has had towards promoting the practice of moral righteousness. And this too in direct contrariety to the very design of the apostle in mentioning, upon this occasion, the sin of Adam; which is here plainly introduced, by way of simile, in order to illustrate the signal benefits of the gospel by comparing them with the effects of that first transgression.

Much after the same manner, St. Paul in another of his Epistles advances a comparison between the death of Adam and the resurrection of Christ. "*As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" As the death of Adam did at once carry in it the emblem and the proof of that mortality which was to pass upon the whole human species, so likewise was the resurrection of Christ, both the exemplar and the evidence of a general resurrection to everlasting life. Nor can it seem at all surprising, that the Apostle should say in the sense now given, that "*by one man many were made sinners,*" when we see that in every age this is in fact the case and

and that numbers are every day corrupted or made sinners by some one contagious example. Nay, with what peculiar emphasis is it said, in this sense, of the very first offender of the human race, that “*by him many were made sinners,*” since the influence of this example affecting his immediate posterity, and through their means the next in succession, and so onwards, may well enough be considered as propagating itself throughout the intire species, down to the latest generations of mankind. Most certain it is, that according to this idea of the nature and consequences of his offence, the first transgressor stands conspicuously at the head of the human apostacy. His disobedience, therefore, is with the utmost propriety introduced by the Apostle as a very lively contrast to the obedience of our blessed Saviour, who came into the world, to place himself at the head of a reformed and virtuous order of men. It has indeed been alledged, that in the Greek text of the passage referred to, the original word, which we render “made,” is not *εγεννησεν*,

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but κατεσθην * . But if this latter word be ever used as synonymous to the former, or even to the substantive verb ησαν, then will the view, which we have been giving of this passage, be no way affected by that remark. And that it is so appears from James iii. 6. iv. 4. and might be proved from other authorities. Thus then we see in what sense it was said by St. Paul, that “*by one man sin entered into the world,*” and that “*by the disobedience of one many*” “*were made sinners.*” The interpretation of these passages, which has now been offered, is perfectly agreeable to the design of the Apostle, according to the connection in which they occur, and is exactly suitable to the terms themselves he makes use of, they being such as are in common language applied to express a sentiment of the very same kind. What would we more?

* See Taylor on Original Sin, Part I. p. 33.

CHAP. V.

THE IMPORTANT USES TO WHICH THE
DOCTRINE MAY BE APPLIED BY UN-
BELIEVERS AND BY CHRISTIANS. 19

IT will not perhaps be admitted as just reasoning, to infer the truth of principles from their apparent usefulness, and their direct tendency to advance some of the highest interests of mankind. This however will abundantly justify those who, by different arguments, are convinced of the truth of them, in endeavouring to recommend them in all their energy to the attention of others. Though that representation, which we have been giving of the dignity of human nature, may be not a little disagreeable to the sentiments of many, yet when they see to what *important uses* it may be applied, and what interesting speculations naturally arise from the principles we have been contending for,

may we not presume, that they will be so much the more disposed to give them a candid examination? May we not at least hope, that this may be the means of abating any intemperate zeal, which they may hitherto have indulged for the contrary principles, even though they should not after all be convinced of the falshood of them?

Let us therefore reflect upon some of those important maxims that are to be deduced from the subject we have been discussing, and from the view we have taken of it. By this means, likewise, we may be assisting such, as admitting the truth of our principles, would gladly make the fullest improvement of them.

First then, we may observe, that if the account which has been given of the natural principles of the human mind be a just one, then here is the noblest foundation laid for love and gratitude towards the great Author of our being. It is plain, that by the faculty of reason common to mankind, they are qualified for attending to the design, and for discerning the

the uses of the various productions of nature. By the same faculty, they are enabled to pass a judgment upon the probable effect of their own actions, and upon the influence which the pursuits of others may have, either towards promoting or obstructing the schemes which they themselves have formed. And by having the various beings around them thus subjected to their inspection, they have it in their power to procure for themselves numberless accommodations, and to enlarge by their own activity the scene of their happiness. But, above all, it is to be remembered, that from this our rational frame, results our capacity for discerning in the order and in the stated dependencies of things, together with the uniform effects of them, the most convincing proofs of a supreme mind, whose never ceasing providence sustains and invigorates the whole ; to whom we may securely refer all our most important interests ; and from whose goodness and wisdom we may derive the fullest consolation, amidst all that disappointment

and uncertainty to which our own expectations must necessarily be exposed.

Still, however, had each individual of our race been made rational, without being endowed at the same time with inclinations to society, and destitute of any moral principle by which he might be excited to love a character of justice, benevolence, and mercy, the satisfactions arising from his intellectual powers would have been extremely incomplete. But being by nature prompted to make the welfare of every intelligent being the object of his cordial wish, and the thought of it the matter of his sincere delight, the sources of his happiness are proportionably multiplied. Our reasoning faculties exert themselves with redoubled alacrity in seeking after and discovering that great PARENT-MIND, who is the center of hope to all his reasonable creatures; contemplating him not only as our own benefactor, but as the universal Father, whose unbounded and unchangeable goodness, is the ground not only of our unshaken trust,

trust, but likewise of our most devout and affectionate admiration! And as such joys as these must have been wholly lost, through the want merely of social affections and a moral taste, how perfect soever might have been our intellectual faculties, so had man been by nature rational, but by nature too, averse to society, and formed with those vicious propensities which some have imputed to his original constitution, we must then have concluded him to have been *made for mischief*. For it is apparent, that when by acquired habits of vice, men have alienated themselves from all just regards to the happiness of others, the more perfectly they enjoy their reasonable powers, so much the more capable are they of pursuing with fatal success the most enormous villanies. And a man of an abandoned character, being at the same time sagacious, is not only the greatest monster in the universe, but likewise of all others, the most intolerable pest of society. But how gracious is the real order and appointment of nature! As man is, by his original constitution, not only

only rational, but also social, and as the indulging these dispositions, if they are indeed of nature's growth, must be at least as immediately connected with a man's private happiness as the exercise of his own reason, or the gratification of his own animal propensities, here is the *best* provision made at once, both for private and for general happiness. Nor can the most perfect reason suggest any method for pursuing the one, which will not be equally effectual for the security of the other.

When we observe such an harmony in the leading powers of human nature; when we likewise attend to the several inferior principles that are made subservient to them; when we see them all formed into one regular system of passions and affections by the authoritative principle of conscience; when we consider that this is not the peculiar constitution of one or other individual, but the character of humanity itself; when, I say, we see the divine wisdom *thus* exerted in the formation of the whole human species, when we see all the powers of man thus harmoniously

moniously conspiring to the production of the most extensive happiness, what more convincing proofs can we have of the *all-perfect goodness* of the SUPREME CREATOR? How wretched soever we may imagine human society to have been in any former ages, or how miserable soever we may suppose it to be at present, yet so long as there is in the original constitution of our own minds such a foundation laid for happiness, for happiness substantial and sublime, what is this but *nature's promise*, a pledge given us by heaven itself of better things to come, either in this or in a succeeding state of being, or perhaps in both?

But indeed what glorious effects, of this original frame of our natures, have been really apparent in every age and part of the world! Notwithstanding all its disorders, tumults and follies, is it not obvious, that mankind in general have been a pleased and happy race? What perpetual entertainment pours in upon the contemplative mind from every region of the universe, from its various history, and from
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the several scenes that have been exhibited upon its august theatre? What mutual satisfaction in conversation and friendship? What contentment and joy, what glorious enterprises, what noble deeds have resulted from the leagues and alliances of man with man? And what an elevated happiness must those have enjoyed within the peaceful retreats of their own breasts, whose generous virtue, whose invincible integrity, whose untainted honour, have been to others the incessant subject of admiration and of praise? And if the imperfect virtue of our fellow-creatures thus excites our veneration, if we think it a debt owing to their generous characters, which on our part it would be infamous not to pay; what esteem and love must be due to the great PARENT-MIND, from whose original creation, and presiding providence, we derive every other source of consolation, and all those virtues which adorn and felicitate human life? Being ourselves partakers in these common privileges of humanity, how fervent should be our gratitude to that

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sovereign father of our spirits, who having made us in *the image of himself*, has consequently formed us for a happiness similar to his own? To be unaffected with such contemplations as these, to feel no flame of devotion, no ardours of pious affection, when the privileges of our own natures, when the first and most eminent of God's creation here below is our theme, must either imply a most dreadful insensibility, or else be a most melancholy proof of the unhappy influence of false principles towards depriving us of some of the most refined, and at the same time most substantial pleasures.

With these the *sound* principles of religious faith are able richly to supply us, as must be sufficiently evident from the reflections we have now been insisting upon, but will be still more apparent, if we attend likewise to this other consideration:

That the account which has been given of man in the high prerogatives of his nature, lays a most reasonable foundation for *the hope of immortality*. The appetites of mere animal life, plainly appear to be

be adapted to the present scene of existence, and very probably to it alone; since for any thing that we know to the contrary, it is here only that they can be furnished with materials for their gratification. But the case is totally different with respect to those principles which form the internal constitution of human kind. The cultivation of these is so far from having any necessary connection with the present corporeal state, that, on the other hand, we then exert them most perfectly, when by a previous discipline of our passions we are raised above any fond regards to merely sensible objects of delight. And, reversely, those who addict themselves with an inordinate attachment to sensual gratifications, are for that very reason so much the more incapacitated for intellectual and moral acquisitions. We seem likewise generally to acknowledge the existence of some superior orders of created beings, who having no connection with bodily organs, do yet enjoy the pleasures of reason and society, after a manner far more perfect than that in which they are

are or can be enjoyed by the wisest of the human race here upon earth. Where then can be the difficulty of believing, that this may hereafter be the improved condition of man himself? Nay, would it not be the highest contradiction to imagine that the enjoyments of the mind must necessarily cease, when our connection with this material world is at an end, whilst at the same time we believe, that the great Creator of all things is perfect in knowledge and moral excellency, though by the essential property of his nature he is infinitely exalted, even beyond the possibility of being conscious to any bodily impressions? Does the highest perfection dwell in an unembodied and purely spiritual nature? And shall we pronounce it impossible for this sovereign mind to form an image of himself in man, that shall be independent upon body? Shall we believe, that the faint resemblance of his perfections, of which we ourselves are actually partakers, must perish, for no other reason, but because we are shortly to lose those bodily organs which bear no

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resemblance to these perfections at all? This then being the apparent difference between bodily sensations and the peculiar operations of a mind, the cessation of the one cannot in any degree imply the cessation of the other.

But there is another very important difference between the powers of sense and those of intellect, which gives prodigious weight to the argument in favour of a future state drawn from the faculties of the human mind. The difference is this, that our bodily senses are plainly seen to arrive at their utmost perfection in the present state. So that after a short period, instead of being able to exert themselves with any new accession of vigor, they languish and decay. Directly the reverse of this is the case with respect to our rational and moral powers. The most exalted knowledge, the most elevated virtue, that have ever yet been attained to by any of the sons of men, do at once excite an ardent desire after more, and make us still more deeply conscious of a capacity for acquiring it. Nor are there

there any who have left this world with a more lively apprehension of something still within the reach of their mental powers, though not attainable in the present life, than those who have, whilst here, cultivated these powers with the greatest industry. Nay even among such as are least attentive to mental improvements, who are almost intirely negligent of them, we find modes of speaking not uncommon, which seem plainly to imply a secret conviction, that there are certain powers belonging to the human mind that cannot possibly have their adequate exertion in the present world. This is sometimes very foolishly assigned as a reason for not exerting them at all. Accordingly the desire of immortality seems to have been universally considered as inseparable from the mind of man. And whether we look upon this desire as an immediate instinct implanted in our natures, or whether we suppose it to be derived from that immediate consciousness which we have of the natural tendency of our powers towards a state of higher perfection than they can

possibly arrive at in this life, still it is a truly *natural* desire. And what one instance is there of any natural passion for which provision has not been made by the bountiful Author of our being? What one reason can be assigned, why this more than any other should be disappointed? Or can we possibly reconcile the disappointment of it to the acknowledged attributes of the Supreme Deity? Is he envious? Or is his power limited; so that he cannot extend his supporting influences beyond the grave? Or is that goodness, which we profess to adore as inexhaustible, confined to the comparatively diminutive period of this transient scene?

Before we conclude this particular, it will not be amiss to observe, that as the natural powers of man afford so convincing a proof of a future state, so from these may be made the surest inferences with respect to the nature of the happiness which is in that state to be enjoyed. The happiness of man must necessarily consist in the perfection of man's nature. The happiness of other natures may be by him
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contemplated, but it cannot be by him enjoyed, otherwise than by a social participation, and the making it our own by friendly sympathy and congratulation. If therefore man be by nature rational, formed for virtue, for society, for friendship; in the highest improvements of these must his most perfect happiness consist.

But let us not forget another most interesting maxim, immediately deducible from the principles we have been endeavouring to establish; and which is, that as to what is most essential to the dignity and happiness of a man, all mankind are by nature placed upon a level. Some indeed have seemed to apprehend, that there is the same diversity of natural powers in the human kind, as is apparent in the brutal. Yet upon all of human kind, we suppose the same general duties to be incumbent. And we condemn the violation of them, in whomsoever of mankind any such infringements are to be observed. We must therefore either believe, that they are all by nature qualified for the discharge of these duties, or else impute a very high

degree of partiality to the supreme governor of the universe, in the case of those who are not so qualified. But among the brutes, as there are different species, so we form our expectations from them accordingly. We never look for swiftness among the grazing kind, for courage or for cunning among the bleating herd. Nor do we imagine that by any discipline whatsoever they can be made to acquire them. Whereas among the human species, there have been instances of those who have been dreadfully immersed in ignorance and in vicious habits, and of whom, if of any, it might have been affirmed, that stupidity and vice were natural to them, knowledge and virtue impossibilities, who yet, through the efficacy of a moral discipline, have become eminent for their wisdom and their virtuous qualities. We may therefore still maintain, that, "as to what is most essential to the dignity and happiness of a man, all mankind are by nature upon a level." They have the same common reason, the same general foundations for virtue

virtue laid in the natural principles of their minds, the same natural hopes of immortality. These are the privileges of mankind, as such not dependent upon family distinctions, riches, and external honours, and capable, as appears from undeniable fact, of being gloriously improved by men of every condition.

Is there not here a solid foundation laid for the comfort of those who, being placed in inferior circumstances, may perhaps be treated with contempt and disdain by some of higher rank? When this contempt is founded, as it generally is, upon the meanness of their outward condition alone, it is unjust and cruel. Those, however, upon whom it is thrown, may by a proper cultivation of the powers they enjoy in common with those in the most exalted situation, soon learn to make light of it, and become conscious of a dignity far superior to any that can arise from the greatest elevation of outward circumstances. As therefore we are bound, according to the excellent maxim inculcated by St. Peter, to "*honour all men,*"

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on account of that *image of God* of which all are partakers, so by whomsoever this image of God in their own minds is revered, by whomsoever it is preserved uncorrupted, these are the worthiest objects of our esteem, how low soever may be their outward situation. On the other hand, if we have any regard for *the real dignity* of human nature, if we do indeed prefer it to the mere tinsel-glories of outward pomp, there are none whom we shall more heartily despise than those *high born vassals of iniquity*, who by prostituting the sacred principles of conscience, and every right of nature, to vile ambition or sordid interest, have in fact degraded themselves to the lowest condition of humanity.

This natural equality of mankind carries in it likewise the most incontestable demonstration against the absurd and impious claims of arbitrary power. Our blessed Saviour urges it as an argument against any such power among christians, that they are "BRETHREN." And is not the argument equally cogent with respect to the *whole human race*? Are we
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not brethren by standing in the same relation to the Supreme Father of the universe? Brethren, by being endowed with the same general principles of nature? Brethren in the glorious hope of immortality? And is it ever to be believed, that one rational, social, immortal creature of God, should be made on purpose to be *the slave* of another; or that this other should contrary to the whole course of nature, be made to prey upon his own kind? As all men are *naturally* endowed with the same common principles of reason and of morality, all must have an *equal* right to the exercise of despotic power, which would introduce everlasting discord; or else none can have that right, and government must depend intirely upon voluntary compact and stipulation.

The same general reasoning, by which the civil rights of mankind are so fully established, must hold equally conclusive against any dominion over their faith, that has been or ever can be claimed by one or more of their fellow-creatures. As every man has an understanding of his own, he
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must for that very reason have a right to use it. Why else was it given him? And as every man is accountable for his own temper; as every man's own mind is by the great Author of nature committed to his own management, he must undoubtedly have a right to use those modes of worship which he himself apprehends to be best calculated for his improvement in virtue and substantial piety. To maintain the contrary, that he is under any sort of obligations to renounce his own taste in matters of religion, or at least to forbear the indulgence of it, is in effect to maintain, that this or that particular man or body of men, have an authority given them to interrupt him in the infinitely momentous concern of promoting his own salvation. To assert that every established mode of worship is equally well calculated to assist him in this grand affair, would be most extravagantly absurd! A right therefore to enforce upon another any, besides that one which is best of all adapted to this purpose, must needs amount to a right of debarring him from the most efficacious

efficacious means of making himself happy. And yet, which is in reality that best mode of worship cannot possibly be determined by one man for another, but is alone to be decided by every one for himself. And whoever he be, that would deprive me of the liberty of worshipping God, according to the convictions of my own mind, does at least run the hazard, by every such endeavour, unless he be infallible, of obstructing by that very means the moral improvement of my temper, my preparation for another world; and that to a degree which neither he himself, nor any one else can pretend to ascertain. Who can believe that any human creature should be invested with so dangerous an authority to be exercised over his fellow-creatures, the immortal offspring of God?

To CHRISTIANS—methinks, it might be no small recommendation of the principles we have been endeavouring to establish, to observe, that they furnish us with an easy and incontestable rule, by which to judge of the *nature* and *design* of the *excellency* and *usefulness* of our HOLY

RELIGION.

RELIGION. There must be some rule of judgment in this case; some criterion by which to determine concerning the worth of every religious institution. And if it assumes the character of being divinely-authorized, this is so far from excluding the propriety of any such test, that it does indeed render it still more necessary, least by rashly receiving such an institution under this venerable sanction of divine authority, or by a flagrant misinterpretation of it, we impute to the supreme Deity that which is altogether unworthy to be ascribed to a being of infinite perfection. Now what can this criterion be, but *the original constitution of our own minds, in conjunction with the acknowledged attributes of the divine nature?* It is to our own reception that christianity is proposed; it is for our own benefit, that it is intended. We must, therefore, ere we can consistently acknowledge its divine authority, be well satisfied that it approves itself to the reason of man, that it is calculated to promote the great ends of our own being, of our primary station among the works of
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God, and that its ultimate aim is the very same with that which nature points out as the chief end and design of man's creation. So that reason in general is not more necessary, in order to our judging of the evidence arising from the external proofs of christianity, than a knowledge in particular of human nature, in order to our judging aright of the design of it, and of its aptitude to promote that design.

It is therefore not at all to be wondered at, if some of those who have represented human nature as being altogether depraved, should have considered the morality of the gospel as being but of small account, only a secondary part of christianity, and substituted *faith, mysteries and Jewish ceremonies* in its room. But if the account which we have been giving of human nature be just, then the design of christianity must necessarily be, according to the representation made of it by its first preachers, the inculcating godliness and charity; the making its professors a "*peculiar people zealous of good works,*" and the rendering us "*partakers of a divine nature.*"

Accordingly we find, that the gospel not only gives us the same notions of human nature, that arise from an actual survey of it, but likewise, that all its precepts and doctrines are most evidently calculated to promote its perfection. When to this consideration we add that striking evidence, which we have of its miraculous introduction and establishment, we easily see with how much reason the Apostle might say of it, that it was a doctrine "*worthy of all acceptation.*"

But should the truth of this our CHRISTIAN FAITH be by any disputed, notwithstanding the glorious attestations that accompany it; still, however, it must appear, upon the principles of this our APOLOGY, that God has in the very constitution of our natures, furnished us with the most efficacious motives to the practice of virtue, and that vices of every kind are by a law of our own minds, rendered absolutely inexcusable. Indeed it must be in vain, or at least to very little purpose, that we contend for the importance of morality, if we give up its foundation

in nature. For can that be of any great importance to man, which is wholly foreign to the nature of man? Can it make any part of his essential duty? Can it contribute in any high degree to his happiness? When it is once allowed, that vice is *natural* to mankind, can we wonder afterwards that they should think it a vain attempt to strive against it? Will it be easy to persuade men, who attend to any sort of consistency, that there can be any great crime in following it? For what human tyrant, supposing the thing were possible, would ever have formed the design of making any thing to be the duty of his subjects, and at the same time of infusing into their very natures an antipathy against it, inspiring them with inherent principles of disobedience to his own laws? Or if this perverseness could possibly be imputable to humanity, we are generally inclined to entertain somewhat better notions of divinity. So that if man believe in a God at all, who is the author of their beings and at the same time imagine vice to be agreeable to the original

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formation of their own natures, they will readily, and indeed reasonably enough, conclude, that he will scarcely be so austere as to punish them for following the dictates of that nature which he himself had given them. How can innocence itself be defined, but by saying that it is the keeping ourselves *within the bounds of nature*? And can this too be the definition of guilt? So that to say, that vice is *natural* to mankind is to justify it. What indeed can any one urge that shall be more in favour of it? Were a man deliberately to attempt the proof of this very proposition, that vice was perfectly innocent, what must needs be the main drift of his argument, if he be any thing of a sophister, but to shew that it is *natural*; whence the inference would but too plainly follow, that it *cannot* be culpable?

Accordingly we find, that some of the most abandoned among men, have studied to palliate their crimes by this very plea. And might not many who are apt to make the most tragical complaints of the scepticism of numbers in thinking so lightly,

lightly, as they seem to think, of future punishments, do well to consider, how far they themselves may have contributed towards encouraging this contemptuous notion of them, by giving their countenance to the belief of a *natural* viciousness belonging to the human mind? What opinion more likely than this, to render the doctrine of future punishments incredible?

But let us change the view, and consider what we may so easily believe would be the consequence, were men but firmly persuaded that the human mind is *naturally* formed for VIRTUE, and inclined to the practice of it. Would they not then immediately conclude, that a life of virtue must be, upon the whole, easy and pleasant, whatever difficulties may attend the first attempt to overcome contrary habits already contracted? Will they not infer, that it must needs bring along with it its own reward? Since every thing, that is truly *natural*, is likewise, and for that very reason, pleasant and agreeable. They will readily believe, that, as God has thus

formed us for virtue by the very frame of our own minds, he will never be wanting to befriend our endeavours after the highest moral attainments by his most gracious influences upon our hearts. They will cheerfully, though humbly, entertain the hope of its meeting with his highest approbation, and being finally recompensed with all that happiness that must necessarily be the consequence of the divine favour. They will then no longer object to the most perfect rules of morality, such as are contained in THE GOSPEL, and which have sometimes been in fact objected to through the influence of contrary principles. Nor can they, without the most shameful insolence, take upon them to deny the equity of being awfully punished for violating the law of their own minds; a law the obligation of which must needs be so obvious, and our compliance with it so delightful.

“ Consider” (says Mr. *Howe*, in his *Blessedness of the Righteous*, ch. xi. p. 194, 5)
 “ thou sensual man, whose happiness lies
 “ in colours, and tastes, and sounds, (as
 “ the

“ the moralist ingeniously speaks) that
 “ herdest thyself with brute creatures, and
 “ aimest no higher than they, as little
 “ lookest up, and art as much a stranger
 “ to the thoughts and desires of heaven.
 “ Thy creation did not see *thee* so low.
 “ *They* are where they were, but *thou* art
 “ fallen from thy excellency. God did
 “ *not* make thee a brute creature, but
 “ *thou thyself*. Thou hast yet a spirit
 “ about thee, that might understand its
 “ own original, and alliance to the father
 “ of spirits, that hath a designation in its
 “ nature to higher converses and employ-
 “ ments. Many myriads of such spirits,
 “ of no higher (original) excellency than
 “ thy own, are now in the presence of the
 “ highest majesty, are prying into the
 “ eternal glory, contemplating the per-
 “ fections of the divine nature, beholding
 “ the unveiled face of God, which trans-
 “ fuses upon them its own satisfying
 “ likenesses. Thou art not so low born
 “ but thou mightst attain this state also.
 “ That sovereign Lord and author of
 “ all things calls thee to it; his goodness
 “ invites

“ invites thee ; his authority enjoins thee
 “ to turn thy thoughts and designs this
 “ way. Fear not to be thought im-
 “ modest or presumptuous. 'Tis but a
 “ dutiful ambition—an obedient aspiring.
 “ Thou art under a law to be thus happy ;
 “ nor doth it bind thee to any *natural im-*
 “ *possibility* ; it designs instruction to thee
 “ not delusion, guidance not mockery.
 “ When thou art required to apply and
 “ turn thyself to this blessedness, it is not
 “ the same thing as if thou wert bidden
 “ to remove a mountain, to pluck down a
 “ star, or create a world. Thou art here
 “ put upon nothing but what is agree-
 “ able to the primæval nature of man ;
 “ and though it be to a vast height, thou
 “ must ascend, 'tis by so easy and familiar
 “ methods ; by so apt gradations, that
 “ thou wilt be sensible of no violence
 “ done to *thy nature* in all thy way.”

These are some brief imperfect hints of
 the eminent advantages that attend hon-
 ourable notions of human nature, of its
 original principles and constitution.

CONCLU-

CONCLUSION.

LET us now conclude the whole with observing, that there were *two precepts* inculcated and highly venerated by some ancient moralists; the *one* was, KNOW THYSELF; the other, REVERENCE THYSELF. But were man, as to the original contexture of his mind, so depraved as some have represented him, what would be the meaning, what the use of these precepts? To KNOW OURSELVES would only tend to lessen our sense of every moral obligation. It would directly lead us to conclude, that, however basely we might act, we could not possibly demean ourselves, or act beneath the nature which God had given us. And TO REVERENCE OURSELVES would be to admire deformity, to esteem that which is directly the reverse of all that is good and excellent.

But having, as we hope, given sufficient reason for believing, that these are far
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from being just exhibitions of human nature, we may, without incurring any such consequences, urge these exhortations afresh :

“ *Unto you, O MEN, therefore, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.*” Enter into the recesses of your own hearts. Take care to distinguish between those dispositions which you yourselves have introduced, and those which are the original impressions of a divine hand in your frame. This is a distinction which it will be no difficult matter to form, if proper diligence be applied. Whatever you find of *the image of God* in your souls, revere and honour it ; cherish and bring it to perfection. Whatever is contrary, discard it, as being also *contrary to your own nature*, and what must necessarily, if persisted in, terminate in wretchedness and in dishonour.



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